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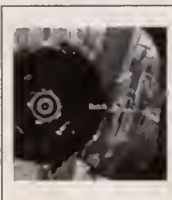
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# FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome to the second issue of *clamor* magazine. Based on the feedback from the first issue, it seems like we got off on the right foot. A lot of people have been telling us they are glad to see a magazine like *clamor* representing such a diverse range of experiences and ideas. We think that is a good thing, so we'll do our best to keep up the momentum.

We didn't have a chance to do much introducing during the first issue, so we'd like to take the rest of this letter to let you know a little more about us and this magazine you hold in your hand right now.

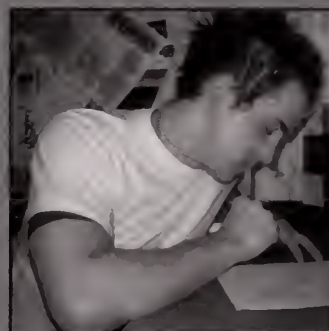
**So who are we?** Jason is a twentysomething graduate student who is in the process of finishing his master's thesis on the culture of underground publishing. His days are brightened by inspirational friends and the unconditional love of and for his Australian cattle dog, La Raza. Jason also teaches a cultural diversity course at Bowling Green State University and is using his free time to organize the 2nd annual Underground Publishing Conference that will be held in Bowling Green on the weekend of June 10-11, 2000.

Jen is only slightly younger than Jason, but just as busy. During the day she works at Lumberjack Distribution, a punk record distribution that distributes independent records, zines, and CDs to stores. Jen also publishes the *Zine Yearbook*, an annual collection of excerpts from the small press, and occasionally publishes her zine, *Fucktooth*. She relieves stress by mothering her houseplants and longing for a big garden—though maybe she should spend all of her spare time getting caught up on her mail, instead.

Now that you know a little bit about who we are, we also wanted to take this opportunity to let you know **what you can expect from *clamor* magazine**. Since we first started talking about *clamor*, we knew that we wanted to start a magazine that broke the trend of top-down media. The kind of media where all the stories, information, news, and entertainment that we hear, read and see comes from corporations that are more concerned with selling products than presenting useful media that has some connection to the everyday world that we all live in. We think one of the best ways to do this is to create a magazine that is essentially by and for people like you. We know that we all have some amazing experiences to share with each other. We know that we have all developed intricate theories about why the world works the way it does. Most of all, we know that you are not fooled by the lack of substance in so much of the media that are out there today. You know that magazines could be so much more if they would only spend half as much time trying to sell you products. So you can expect *clamor* to continuously provide interesting, insightful stories, essays, art and reviews.

Sounds great, right? In order for us to make good on our promises, there are **a few things that we expect from you, the readers**. *clamor* would not exist without the contributions of people like you. Every month we are greeted with more eager ideas from people that they would like to contribute to *clamor*. We say "Keep 'em coming!" There are more than enough pages in this magazine to incorporate your essays, stories, art or reviews, so we encourage you to get in touch with us about any contribution you would like to make. Keep in mind that we are interested in working with you to get your ideas into print. Even if you don't fancy yourself a writer, that doesn't mean you don't have what it takes to participate in this thing called *clamor*. Send us your stuff and we'll work from there.

Jen angel Jason K.





# clamor contributors

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**Casey Boland** (p. 7, 49) works, writes some and reads a lot. He does a zine called *I Defy*: whenever he feels like it and has injected his words and photos into some other zines. Contact him at 614 S. 48<sup>th</sup>. St. Apt. 2R, Philadelphia, PA 19143 usa and if you've been sucked into the cyber trap, [rschb@earthlink.net](mailto:rschb@earthlink.net).

**Ben Fogelson** (p. 72) freelances, and is also writing The Handbook for the Practical Ninja, a novel illustrating a unique and playful approach to mind-body unification, as well as awareness of the affects one has upon one's environment, through action and non-action. He publishes romance stories in *Oregon Cycling* magazine, and collaborates on a process called LOVE. He can be reached at [diarmuid@cetisp.com](mailto:diarmuid@cetisp.com).

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**Jill Fowler** (p. 61) is about to complete her Master's degree in American Culture Studies, and she is ready to dedicate her life to educating others. Her worldview was profoundly enlarged by her ten weeks with Bike-Aid, and she encourages everyone to take life at a slower, simpler pace every once and a while. If you want more information about upcoming Bike-Aid trips, or if you want any more book recommendations, feel free to contact her at [jfowler@bgnet.bgsu.edu](mailto:jfowler@bgnet.bgsu.edu).

**Loolwa Khazzoom** (p. 41) is a published author, and the editor of Behind the Veil of Silence: Arabic and Iranian Jewish Women Speak Out, an anthology. She is also a self-defense instructor with Women Defending Ourselves; and has done ground-breaking work as a Jewish multicultural educator, founding organizations in California and New York and offering workshops internationally. Loolwa Khazzoom also is a musician. She has performed original rock and traditional Middle Eastern and North African Jewish music locally. She currently is putting together an original band, Grrl Monster! See more of her work at [www.loolwa.com](http://www.loolwa.com).

**Amanda Luker** (p. 38) isn't usually as concerned with appearance as her article would lead you to believe. She currently lives in Minneapolis, working as a cook, an editor and a freelance writer. She does a small zine called *Eyes on the Street*, available for \$1 pp. Contact her at [mndonx@aol.com](mailto:mndonx@aol.com).

**Robyn Marasco** (p. 54) is working toward her Ph.D. in political theory/philosophy at the University of California, Berkeley. During those precious and rare moments when she is not reading or writing papers, she is working on the fourth issue of her own zine *Alice is an Island*. She also contributes regular columns to *HeartAttack* and *Hodgepodge*. Please write her at p.o. box 13445, Berkeley, CA 94712-4445 or via email at [hereinhell@aol.com](mailto:hereinhell@aol.com)

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**Jessica Mills** (p. 68) publishes a zine called *Yard Wide Yarns*. When she is not touring the country playing saxophone with bands, she is a substitute teacher in the Florida public schools. She can be reached via email at [yardwideyarns@hotmail.com](mailto:yardwideyarns@hotmail.com). The artwork for her piece was done by Caroline who can be reached at [brazenhussyusa@netscape.net](mailto:brazenhussyusa@netscape.net).

All of **Richard Opalsky's** (p. 20) various moving parts operate under his

close discretion. He likes to spend good times with snuggly Robyn and the cuddly cats. He likes to read, make music, and write essays like a mighty ideologue. He studies philosophy at the New School in NYC for the MA and Ph.D. He also seeks to use his hands, legs, and mouth to make noises that draw attention to social, political and economic inequities... He is a pretty skilled wordsmith, and considers his mouth a weapon... He tries not to shut it, but sometimes he'll. Direct all love letters and hate mail to [thoughtandaction@yahoo.com](mailto:thoughtandaction@yahoo.com)

**Lee Pasado** (p. 35) wants to learn how to do everything himself.

Not known for his prodigious output **Mark Restall** (p. 14) has written two zines in the last two years, *words(and some pictures)*, on music and politics, and *paper and staples*, his current personal/political zine. He is also one half of a record label, No Concessions, who are currently trying to promote female punk bands within the scene. He endorses Chomsky, heavy dub reggae and vegan ice cream. You can reach him at 42 Effingham Rd London N8 0AB ENGLAND or via email at [mrestall@hotmail.com](mailto:mrestall@hotmail.com)

**Vincent Romano** (p. 15) is nobody in particular who happened to be born in the suburbs of New York, hasn't left yet, and is way too critical about everything. His zine *OFF-Line* is available from 35 Barker Avenue #4G, White Plains, New York 10601

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**Sprout** lives in Eugene, Oregon and does stuff.

**George Sweetman** (p. 27) is a wily, traveling, anarchist, queer, punk, writer and unemployed graphic designer. When not out smashing the state he likes to listen to loud obnoxious music, drink cheap beer and hang out with his friends. George can be contacted care of *Clamor*.

Born in Tokyo and raised in Hamilton, Ohio, **John Streamas** (p. 58) is now ABD in American Culture Studies at Bowling Green State University, writing a dissertation on the cultures of Japanese Americans' imprisonment during World War II. He and his wife Valerie Boydo raise three cats and seventeen hackles. [jstreamas@earthlink.net](mailto:jstreamas@earthlink.net)

Despite the fact that he hates having a full time job, **Eric Weiss** (p. 28) continues to live in New York City, (Queens to be exact) the most ridiculously expensive place in the universe to live. He publishes a hardcore music and culture zine called *Rumpshaker*, and is also a regular columnist for *Status* fanzine. He is also a vegan who loves mint chip soy ice cream way too much. He likes the NY Mets baseball team a hell of a lot too. Contact him at [Rshaker5@aol.com](mailto:Rshaker5@aol.com).

**Peter Werbe** (p. 12) is a staff member of the *Fifth Estate*, the longest publishing English-language anarchist newspaper in American History. Sample copies are available from 4632 Second Ave., Detroit, MI 48201. Peter is also the Public Affairs Director for WCSX-FM and WRIF-FM in Detroit. His interviews are broadcast via the internet at [wcsx.com](http://wcsx.com) and [wrif.com](http://wrif.com) in Real Audio, Sundays at 7am and 11pm EST, respectively.

**Mike White** (p. 31) is the editor of the film zine *Cashier du Cinemart*. He can be reached at Cashiers du Cinemart PO Box 2401, Riverview, MI 48192-2401, <http://www.cashiersducinemart.com>

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**Kamilla Wynne** (p. 33) wants to write a good bio, but doesn't know how. She lives in Montreal, where the \$0.99 pizza rots yer brain. See more from her in two zines: *One Bedroom Apartment*, and *The Stranger*. She can be reached via email at [kamilla@gurlmail.com](mailto:kamilla@gurlmail.com).



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We make a damn good magazine, don't you think? We'd like to spend even more time and energy doing it! To do so means spending less time managing the business aspects of *clamor* and doing more editorial work and writing. If you or anyone you know would be interested in becoming a publishing partner of *clamor*, please get in touch with us to discuss more details.

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Dear Clamor,

I loved the bike commuting article, and the Appalachian Trail article. My usual routine on weekends is to sleep a bit, wake, read in the early morning while I watch the sun rise, and fall asleep again. But I read Alex Coughlin's Appalachian Trail article and got so fired up, I couldn't get back to sleep.

Chris Jensen's bike commuting article reminded me a little of Robert A. Heinlein's sci-fi novel *Tunnel in the Sky*. In the book, the main character is preparing to go on a survival course, and he is allowed to bring one weapon. His classmates choose all the most amazing blaster-laser guns, but he is advised to take a simple knife. While he is being advised so, a philosophical discussion begins. The general idea is this: because you cannot dominate the universe, humility is a good thing. A too-powerful weapon will make you overly confident, and more susceptible to destruction. An understated weapon will keep your humility about you, make you more cautious. Heinlein's lecture has served me well throughout my whole life, and as a bicyclist.

In the hilly terrain of Pennsylvania, where I live, when the roads get icy, what kind of cars do I see off-road and even overturned? Cars like my teensy, tiny, 2-wheel-drive, 6-year-old foreign car? Nope. It's the huge 4x4 4-wheel drive SUVs. Invariably. Because the people who were seduced by the illusion of power, lose their humility. An icy road is an icy road. No matter what power your car has, if you're going too fast, you're going to lose control. In the long-run of survival, my money is on Chris, not your average car driver.

I also liked *Creativity and Happiness* by Vique Martin. Great stuff. It came just at the right time to ditch the overbearing, annoying angst I am stricken with from time to time. I'd like to add that too often artists are snobby about being creative. I think scientists are also creative. Whoever came up with the bizarre idea of heart bypass surgery was a damn creative person!

(Let's take a vein from the leg and rewire the heart!)

Colin Develin (*Disturb-o-mat*) tells me he's submitting material to you. Congratulations! Colin is a great guy and an artist I think is destined for cult-hero fame. I highly recommend him.

Best of luck with *Clamor*! If the following issues are as good as the first, it's destined for success! Let me know how I can further support this worthy project! (I'm cooking up a few articles for you to consider...)

Larry Nocella  
editor, QECE (Question Everything Challenge Everything 'zine)  
406 MainSt. #3C  
Collegeville, PA 19426

*ed: Thanks for the kind words Larry. Readers can look forward to seeing more of Larry Nocella in future issues of clamor, and we wholeheartedly encourage everyone to check out QECE insightful, entertaining writing that will get you laughing and thinking at the same time.*

Dear Clamor,

I was so excited when I received *clamor* in the mail! I thought that the magazine was great and I was very pleased with the content. It was one of the first magazines that I couldn't just read in one sitting -- it took me about two days to read through it. That is awesome because most magazines have all this bullshit that makes for quite an uninteresting read. My only criticism was the cover, but besides that, I thought you guys did well in organizing and putting *clamor* out.

Caroline

*ed: We are definitely feeling our way through the process of what it takes to design an interesting cover. Hopefully we are one step closer to that with this issue. Incidentally, you can check out the drawings that Caroline has been doing to accompany Jessica Mills' article on pages 68-71 of this issue and 46-51 of clamor #1*



# The Following Items Are Not Covered By Your HMO:

Tell a friend while in a public place that you're concocting an exposé of the health care system and witness the storm of condemnation by bystanders within earshot will rain upon the subject. Nearly everyone can spin a tale about a run-in with the medical industry. Even mainstream media, often the last stop for massive strife and gripes with major national institutions, have adopted a "let's bash" attitude towards HMOs and insurance companies. So it's no secret that health care in the United States is a cruel joke. The public laughs because it is such a farcical failure and the CEOs of the HMOs laugh because the system that benefits them more than anyone else remains in place and threatens to go unscathed, save for minor revisions. But hope is not yet lost. The cracks grow daily and the massive distrust spreads like a fire on the veil of quality covering medical care. Sure, you've heard the basics about what is wrong, but not much about how to truly remedy the problems. We hear about the sickness but not about the cure. What follows details the problem, the source, the extent and the possible solutions that won't get much media coverage (anything that challenges the capitalist/corporate structure never does). Read on kids, and if you haven't delved deeply into the U.S. health care crisis, prepare to be shocked, angered and appalled.

## An Apple a Day Didn't Keep the Doctor Away — Having No Insurance Did

On two separate occasions in the past year, I came face to face with the monster that is the U.S. health care system. During the month of June, as I hunted fiercely for a job, some pesky pathogens invaded my body. In my sick and debilitated state, I decided that I needed medical attention and headed on over to the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. I figured that since it had a clinic (everyone told me that it was a clinic) it must be cheap. How could they be so odious as to charge exorbitant fees in such a hallowed place for the caring of disadvantaged

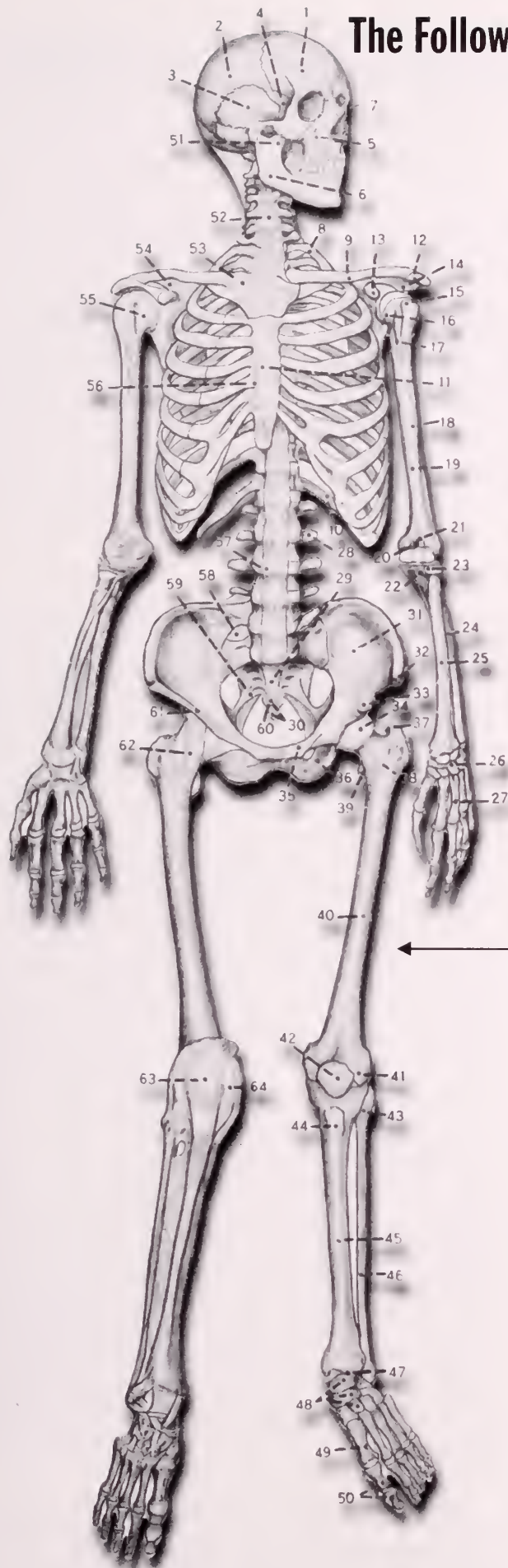
## The Plight of the Patient in the U.S. Healthcare Labyrinth by Casey Boland

people in need?

I waited over an hour for a five-minute exam. The nurse took a sample of the scum off my tongue, rammed a rough injection of penicillin into my backside, and sent me on my way. A month later I received a bill for \$28 — the cost of the throat culture. Hallelujah! I thought. Health care ain't so bad after all. Wrong. A month after that, I ripped open a bill for \$265 — the price of an exam.

Fast forward five months—I have a job with benefits that allow me to go to a fancy dentist. I undergo a particularly brutal cleaning and check-up. Turns out I have some problems. I go back for a consultation visit and I understand just how ridiculously expensive dental work can be. I gaze at the dental assistant in utter shock and total horror as she says the amount: \$2,100. Two thousand and one hundred dollars and no cents (oh ... what a relief). I wasn't buying a new car or a house or an Armani suit worn by Armani himself. I was buying repairs to two teeth rotting in my gums as I sat there. My insurance? It covered \$800 for the fillings.

This, my friends, is only one tiny morsel from the mountainous heap of nightmare experiences spawned from the health care industry in the U.S. And I had it easy. Most Americans, from the middle-management goateed dude to the church-hopping conservative grandma, agree that health care in America is sick and in need of a good doctor. Yet



powerful folks—insurance companies, the American Medical Association and other major (and well-paid) players in medical care make sure that the system stays sick. They rake in millions off the ill health and accidents of others. They seem to feel that their economic health will be jeopardized by devoting comprehensive medical attention towards the health of millions of people. It's a complex issue, yet what remains clear are three indisputable facts: 44 million people have no health insurance (many of which are children), those who can afford the care often complain that it is substandard, and profits do affect how much care an individual will receive. As most will readily say: profits are more important than people. This is a bold statement that requires evidence and justification, so read on.

## Nature of the Beast

Criticizing HMOs and health care is about as American as complaining about work. So how did it get this way? The American health care system is a system where the individual is responsible for the cost of any medical procedures. Health insurance is designed to offset the exorbitant cost of these procedures. "Managed care" is becoming the most popular form of insurance. Businesses own health care facilities and consolidate different health services under one group or plan. Managed care exists mostly as HMOs (Health Maintenance Organization) in the United States, though not exclusively. The hallmarks of an HMO are complete oversight over patient ("customer" or "consumer") care, contractual relationships and organization of providers giving care, and benefits tied to managed care stipulations.

Managed care arose in 1929 and continued onward as a "minor presence" with the Kaiser Health Plan during World War II. Medical care costs soared throughout the 60s and some saw managed care as the solution to skyrocketing prices for procedures and coverage. But it was the HMO Act of 1973 that blazed a trail for the HMO takeover in the 80s and 90s.

An HMO works like this: you have your primary care physician, the person you see for routine health exams. Only they can refer you to a specialist for any sort of procedure. More times than not, primary care physicians are part of medical groups, an organization whose purpose is to contract health care. The relationship among all the actors is commonly referred to as the three Ps: patients, providers and purchasers. The purchaser pays for the care: employers, government or insurance companies. For instance, I enjoy the wonderful coverage of Aetna U.S. health care. My purchaser is my boss who buys coverage from Aetna. My provider is a doctor I have yet to see and I am the happy patient. I can't see the doctor I've gone to since I was a kid—they are not with Aetna. If I need an X-ray, my doctor must write me a referral. Dentists work the same way. HMOs aren't the only health care option in America, but they are becoming the most popular and the most powerful.

When I first learned about my benefits from work, it sounded like utopia. I'd have inexpensive health care, be covered if I suffered a major accident—the HMO seemed like a good friend ready to care for me like mom if I needed it. This is sadly not reality. HMOs provide "rationed care." As a fact sheet on HMOs succinctly put it, "An HMO is a for-profit corporation with responsibilities to its stockholders that take precedence over its responsibilities to you. The HMO directly controls the amount of health care that the doctor is allowed to provide to you." This is the crime that has received much attention. Doctors, surgeons and any health care employee within an HMO must ultimately answer to the HMO.

Here are just some of the trends occurring within the for-profit HMO-dominated health care industry:

- Over the past four years, hospitals have fired thousands of registered nurses to maximize profits. Seventy-five percent of U.S. hospitals have undergone "restructuring," meaning that they downsized nursing staffs, replacing them with aides and "patient care technicians." According to an Ad Hoc Committee to Defend Health Care information

sheet: "A day-shift nurse may care for seven or eight patients and, at the same time, be responsible for supervising an aide assigned to care for four or five others. This means that the nurse will be effectively in charge of 12 patients."

- One study found that 99 percent of California hospitals reported less than 120 hours of on-the-job training for newly hired nursing personnel. The majority of hospitals provided less than 20 hours of classroom instruction and 88 percent provided less than 40 hours of instruction time. These people "insert catheters, read EKGs, suction tracheotomy tubes, and changed sterile dressings."

- A questionnaire of 37,000 patients conducted by the American Hospital Association in 1998 found that 33 percent felt they went home too early. Thirty percent thought they were not warned about possible problem signs associated with their condition after they left the hospital, 23 percent said they received little information about their condition, while 29 percent cited problems with care and the lack of coordination between various providers.

- Over 100,000 people lose their health insurance every month.
- Over 25 cents of every care dollar is spent on paperwork, advertising and multimillion-dollar CEO salaries.
- Doctors are given financial incentives to give less care.

## Will One Beast Reign Supreme?

A few giant firms own or control a growing share of medical practice says Physicians For a National Health Program (PNHP), a coalition of health practitioners devoted to curtailing the corporate takeover of health care before it's too late. "The winners in the new medical marketplace are determined by financial clout, not medical quality. The result: three or four hospital chains and managed care plans will soon corner the market, leaving physicians and patients with few options. Doctors who don't fit with corporate needs will be shut out, regardless of patient needs."

Many managed care plans enjoy the act of "delisting," that is, throwing out physicians who don't play along to the tune of the piper and his money bags. Thousands have been delisted in Texas, California, Massachusetts and Washington D.C. The proud physician who appeared in Aetna's newsletter as "Primary Care Physician of the Month" wound up an ex-Aetna physician shortly afterwards when he was seen to have racked up too many costs for patients in his practice. The PNHP describe the problem further: "HMOs/insurers that can raise massive amounts of capital by selling stock have a decisive advantage. Their deep pockets allow them to mount massive ad campaigns ... and set premiums below costs until competitors are driven out .... As a result not-for-profit plans across the country are going for-profit (even Blue Cross), and small plans are being taken over."

Consider the likely fate of Medicare and Medicaid. HMOs have begun feasting on Medicare and Medicaid contracts. This is basically the privatization of government funded health programs for those in special need. According to PNHP, "Nationwide, Medicare HMOs provide strikingly substandard homecare and rehabilitation to the disabled elderly. Tennessee Medicaid HMOs have failed to pay doctors and hospitals for care." Or look at Florida. Half of all Medicaid spending in four HMOs was for administrative costs. Our friends at PNHP had this to say about the legacy of HMO Medicaid care in Florida: "In one plan that enrolled 48,000 Medicaid recipients, 19% of total Medicaid dollars went for the three owners' salaries. Thousands of patients were denied vital care; sales reps often illegally pressured healthy people into joining HMOs, while discouraging those who were ill .... a cursory state audit found serious problems at 21 of the 29 HMOs."

Since we're on the subject of Florida, one firm owns a quarter of all hospitals in the state—Columbia/HCA. The hospital chain giant plans on gobbling up hospitals in Massachusetts, Denver and Chicago. Likewise, HMOs are multiplying in this health care corporate mating season. Between 1990 and 1995, for-profit HMOs grew 15 fold. By 1996,



630 HMOs existed across the nation, with 459 of those being for-profit. The hungry hungry HMOs that devour more and more patients daily include Oxford Health Plans Inc., United HealthCare Corporation, CIGNA Corporation, Humana Inc. and Aetna U.S. Healthcare. If you're in an HMO, chances are you belong to one of these.

## Bikes vs. Cars, 0 - 1

Sure, it's all well and good to rant on and on about how much health care sucks, especially when I have only experienced trivial episodes of such degradation. Yet people around me seem to have had the great fortune of suffering the worst health care has to offer.

Let's look at the case of Rachel. When she set off on the roadways of Philly last summer, she expected it to be a day of fun and excitement, though she would ride into a lot more excitement and a lot less fun than she expected. While riding her bike with her friend up Spruce Street near the University of Pennsylvania, she extended her arm to indicate she was about to cross the road. Within seconds she was on the pavement, unconscious and drenched with blood. A Chrysler LeBaron (speeding and operated by a preoccupied cell phone user) slammed Rachel onto the ground and into a long and tortuous battle with the health care system.

The 21-year-old suffered a long list of injuries: open fracture to the tibia, other bone fractures in her left leg, facial fractures, hemorrhaging in the brain, cuts, bruises and scrapes. Fortunately, her parent's health insurance covered costs of repairing the damages to her body—a price tag in the neighborhood of \$54,000. Yet their HMO didn't guarantee complete and compassionate care while in the hospital. "Some of them (the nurses) were very nice," Rachel said. "Most of the others were indifferent, they didn't seem to care one way or another what happened to me. A good amount of them were rather mean. If I'd call them to change my bedpan or to let me go to the bathroom, they would seem very irritated .... They weren't very nice people."

Rachel wallowed in a hospital bed for four days. On her second day, a nurse mentioned that she might be released by the end of that day. But Rachel felt that even four days didn't seem to be an adequate time for her to recover to the point of comfortably leaving the hospital's care. "I think I should have been there longer, considering the fact that they were trying to make sure I could turn around standing with crutches and I was so drugged I kept falling over." As Rachel sees it, the hospital was eager to ship her on her way, rehabilitated or not. She added, "I had just been casted. I still wasn't eating. They had just found that my hemorrhaging had just started to re-absorb and they didn't really follow through on much more checking on that."

Rachel's experiences with the hospital and her parent's HMO were far from behind her when she left the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. She required monthly X-rays to determine the progress of bone growth in her leg, as well as physical therapy. Her HMO and her primary care physician disagreed. "The thing they (her parent's HMO—New Jersey Blue Cross Blue Shield) did which was very interesting was, they kept filling out our insurance claims and putting my sister's name .... or my father's name as the patient and then rejecting it," Rachel said. She added that such a tactic was common among HMOs to slow down payments, according to her lawyer.

As for X-rays, instead of the hospital she was treated at (not an easy task for someone who cannot drive, let alone walk). Her family primary care physician also had a curious gripe with X-rays. "Even though the fracture has not healed ... they said, 'why does she need X-rays?'" Rachel said.

Even her family doctor, their primary care physician, was not behaving as the classic doctor-knows-best family physician should. Rachel also mentioned, "He said I didn't need physical therapy even though they had never seen me. So they have no idea what state I'm in. He never spoke with my current doctor that's treating me for this. But they

just assumed it (that she didn't need PT) and I believe it's because the insurance company just says, 'Give them the least attention they need and move on.'"

## More Tales From the Crypt of Managed Care

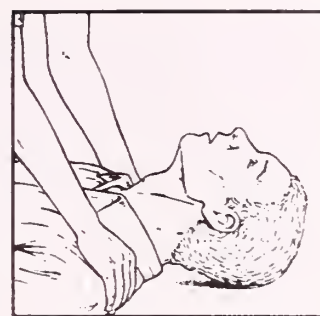
Kelly works as a cleaning lady with her mom. She does not have insurance, something she didn't think much about until she had to have her gall bladder removed. From the start, the hospital gave her substandard care and minimal attention. She still experiences excruciating pain. She was put on a liquid diet. Whenever she tries to schedule appointments, they are pushed back by months. At one point, the pain drove her to the emergency room, where she was denied admittance.

Horror stories like Kelly and Rachel are all too common, as one web site displays. Here's only a small sampling of the health care nightmares that have stricken thousands in the United States:

- A 43-year-old Michigan woman told three HMO physicians that she was worried about her unexplained weight loss: the five-foot, three-inch woman went down to 98 pounds. The physicians all diagnosed hypochondria. One doctor even told the patient, "Most women would kill to have your problem." It took two years before HMO doctors finally diagnosed the real culprit: multiple sclerosis.

- A Virginia girl began having severe headaches when she was 11 years old. For more than a year her mother would take her to her HMO pediatrician, pleading with him to discover the cause of the girl's headaches, nausea and bloodshot eyes. But the doctor insisted that such problems were common for pre-teen girls and prescribed adult dosages of migraine medicine. By the time the girl was a freshman in high school, she was suffering with headaches constantly, routinely vomiting from nausea. Her school psychologist wrote a note to the girl's doctor, imploring him to perform an MRI and an EEG. When the HMO doctor finally relented and ordered the test it was discovered that a cyst that emanated from a tumor covered 40 percent of her brain.

- A 12-year-old Washington, D.C. boy was diagnosed with bone cancer in his lower leg. The parents' oncologist contacted their health plan to obtain authorization for a procedure the doctor felt would save the leg. After a series of appeals and denials by all levels of the HMO, including the HMO medical director, the family appealed to the father's employer, the provider of the insurance. Once the employer became in-



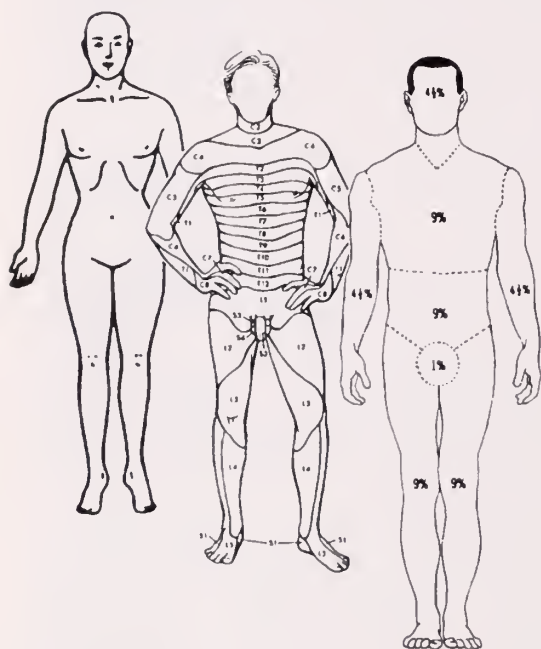
volved, the HMO approved the procedure- nearly four months after the initial request. It was too late by that time- the cancer had spread. The boy's leg was amputated.

- A 6 year-old boy suffering severe hearing loss was fitted for hearing aids at a cost of \$600 apiece. The child's HMO denied reimbursement, telling the parents that hearing loss is a natural process of aging and therefore not covered under their plan

## International Perspective

The truly sorry and despicable condition of U.S. health care makes more sense when put into worldwide perspective and the true authorities over the system are considered. The United States boasts the undeniable honor of being the only industrialized nation not to offer any form of universal health care coverage. According to several studies, The U.S. possesses a poor track record of health problems among its citizenry (surprise, surprise). It is well known that the United States has the highest infant mortality rate among industrialized countries, an achievement the United States attains annually. It also ranks highest in the category of premature deaths (those considered preventable had appropriate medical knowledge been offered and public health principles been enforced).

According to a study conducted by The Commonwealth Fund (a non-partisan research group), the United States spends more than double what other countries spent on health care. Now before all whom defend privatized health care rejoice, read the fine print. Hospital costs per day and physicians fees ate up much of the health-spending



budget. That is, people paid more to be hospitalized in the United States than any other industrialized nation (five times more). The United States also had the fewest number of hospitable days. But one category where the United States is notoriously derelict is health insurance.

## Health for Sale

More people go without insurance in America than in any other industrialized country. This is the news that major media outlets in the United States find fit to print, along with reports hammering HMOs. About 44.3 million went without health insurance in 1998, a million more than a year before, according to a Census Bureau survey of health coverage. Reporter Tony Pugh said in a *Philadelphia Inquirer* article, "Despite the renewed attention and expansive job market, health insurance is increasingly unaffordable for the poor, with medical costs continuing to rise faster than inflation." Many employers are cutting costs by trimming health coverage for their employees. Forty-seven and a half percent of workers received no such coverage from the boss. Yeah, yeah, yeah- you've heard it all before. But here are some facts the newspaper and *Nightline* usually leave out. Working a full-time job is NOT a

guarantee of insurance. As the Commonwealth says, "Most uninsured adults surveyed were working or married to a worker." They add, "Despite the importance of ready access to health care for a productive and stable work force, many employers do not offer health benefits to their employees." It's all about saving the bucks whenever and wherever possible, no matter what the human cost.

Of particular concern are the children living with no insurance. About 11.1 million children were not insured in 1998. Medicaid is the common coverage for lower-income people, especially children. Yet due to welfare "reform," the number of people covered by Medicaid dropped in 1998 (40.6 percent down from 43.3 percent). And some may wonder why the United States could have the highest infant mortality rate in the Western world.

But those with insurance (and not a lot of money) don't fare much better. Another Commonwealth Fund study found high levels of concern over medical care for those earning less than \$35,000 annually. Of these, one-third were uninsured (compared to 7 per cent in the top half of the income range), one-fourth were in fair or poor health, two in five went without necessary medical care due to costs, and more than half said they had "just enough" or "not enough" to pay medical bills. As for folks like me earning less than \$20,000 a year, the study found that two in five were uninsured. As for us poor people with less than 20 grand, we were five times as likely to be in poor health as those yuppie Starbucks patrons with incomes over \$60,000.

## Bill of Rights for Whom?

So all of us know what the hell's wrong with medical care in America. It's expensive and run by greedy corporations and the quality suffers because profits matter more than people and millions have no insurance. What is the government, the popularly elected men and women in popularly sanctioned power, going to do about this travesty? Considering the mammoth force that is the insurance lobby, don't expect big-time politicians, from Clinton to Gore to Bush 2 to Bill Bradley, to do much about it. (The managed health care industry pumped \$2.1 million into the pockets of candidates and party organizations in 1999, up from \$1.2 million in 1994).

Recall the much ballyhooed patient's bill of rights that received much fanfare recently. In October of 1999, the House of Representatives passed the bill of rights (Norwood-Dingell bill), which set restrictions on managed care and allowed patients to sue their insurers. The bill would eradicate a federal ban on lawsuits against HMOs and other insurers, allow complaints to be brought before an independent panel whose decisions are binding on the health plan, and require HMOs or insurers to pay for specialists and routine care if patient needs them.

Yet this bill will probably never see the light of the public's day. The Senate has yet to vote on it, and they passed their own "more modest legislation," in July. The two governing bodies will need to reconcile their differences and chances are the outcome will be less than a radical improvement for patients. Clinton already said he would veto an extra measure of the bill- a call for \$47 billion in tax credits to cover the nation's uninsured.

As expected, insurance companies and HMOs lobbied ferociously against the bill. They claimed it would increase costs and force people to forgo insurance. It's interesting that insurance companies should be concerned about reining in costs, considering that their CEOs earn millions a month in just stock options. Stephen Wiggins, the former CEO of Oxford Health Plans, raked in \$29.1 million. Joseph Sebastianelli, the big cheese of Aetna, pulled in a meager \$7,394,506. Wilson Taylor, the head honcho of CIGNA Corporation made a paltry \$11,568,410. As Ron Pollack, executive director of Families USA put it, "If the HMO and insurance industry truly cares about improving health care for America's families, it should shift some of the money spent on executive compensation to improve consumer protection and coverage." (Keep in mind,



lobbying on the part of insurance companies during the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress added up to \$2.69 billion. That's \$5 million per member of Congress).

Even if the HMO CEOs cannot afford to give a little of their precious stock options (not even considering their salaries), what about the profits of HMOs and insurance companies? Oxford Health Plans, Inc. enrolls about 1,451,000 people. They make \$40.30 per enrollee. Do the math. That's mucho bucks a year. Or how about my HMO—Aetna. I'm among the 4,000,519 enrolled. They get about \$7.06 from each of us. And these people complain about the cost of possible lawsuits and extra care?

### Band Aids, Surgery or Euthanasia? The Single-Payer Solution

Is there any way out of this conundrum, you must be asking? Some way to spread health care to the millions without it and to improve the quality of that care? To give to America what it has been denied for its entire existence? There is a cure for the ailments of medical care in the United States yet you won't hear much about it in the media and you sure won't hear anything positive when it is mentioned on those blue-moon occasions. That elixir is a single-payer health care system.

Before you patriots start belly-aching about commies and systems of service where you get shoddy care and wait in long lines, let's take a long, hard look at single-payer vs. socialized medicine vs. America's privatized system. Socialized medicine can be found in several European countries, such as England. The defining characteristic of socialized medicine is that doctors are on the government's payroll. Advocates of a single-payer health care system argue that socialized medicine works in some countries, but would not cut it for a nation as large and complex as the United States. They argue that choice is limited under socialized medical care.

Single-payer, also called national health insurance and universal health care, is similar to socialized medicine in that anyone can go to a physician or a hospital of their choice for whatever care they require. All basic medical services are free. Preventive care is also provided. Most industrialized countries enjoy this luxury—the luxury of guaranteed health care coverage.

If people don't pay a penny for getting medical care, how do the docs get paid? The system would be federally financed and administered by a single public insurer at the state or regional level, in effect, the government. I agree, the government is not the ideal body for dominating any services, but keep in mind, elected officials are accountable to the public. The way it is now, CEOs of HMOs are insulated and nearly untouchable. We can't vote them out. I'm just as concerned about government corruption and duplicity as the next anarchist or radical leftist, but there is a crisis in health care. We need to consider practical and relatively immediate solutions. According to the PNHP, employers would pay a 7 percent payroll tax and employees would pay 2 percent. This is not as expensive as you may think; 90 to 95 percent of people will pay less overall for health care, considering how much is taken out of paychecks or paid monthly for health insurance.

Most red-blooded Americans immediately cry "Bureaucracy!" whenever government-related measures are considered. According to the General Accounting Office, you have nothing to fear as far as fund and tax-draining bureaucracies go. They predict that eliminating private insurance bills and administrative waste (by abolishing insurance companies) would save 10 percent, or \$100 billion. The savings would pay for medical care. The Congressional Budget Office projects that single-payer could reduce health costs by \$225 billion.

Philadelphia newspapers lately overflow with reports of hospital money debacles and threats of closings and an all around fiscal and quality crisis. Under single-payer, budgets would be allocated based on care priorities. Administrative costs for billing to private

insurance companies devour a decent portion of a hospital's budget; this would be eliminated.

The insurance industry has everything to fear under a single-payer system, because there is no need for them. One bill under consideration in the House would provide funding for retraining those displaced by the razing of health insurance. This bill, known as the Health Security Act (HB 1200), seeks to provide universal and comprehensive health care for all Americans. The single-payer would be the government.

Americans are leery of anything proposing more taxes. It's our nature. It's in our blood. Yet we don't realize that we are not taxed as much as many Europeans. Social services cost money and that money must come from somewhere (of course, there's that hefty defense budget that needs a good gutting). As the Universal Health Care Action Network states: "Even with additional taxes, it (single-payer) would be cheaper than our present system. We now pay for health care in multiple different ways—through our paychecks, deductibles, copayments, and the price of goods and services, as well as through taxes and out of pocket. According to the Congressional Budget Office ... any increase in taxes would be more than offset by large savings to the system as a whole."

Let's break it down to basic economics: private insurers take on average 13 percent of premium dollars for overhead and profit. Consider the fact that overhead and profits are about 30 percent in HMOs. Then look at Canada (who has a single-payer style system); overhead uses less than one percent of funds. The bottom line is this: bureaucratic costs consume much of the money involved with American health care. The PNHP says, "The average office-based American doctor employs 1.5 clerical and managerial staff, spends 44 percent of gross income on overhead and devotes 134 hours of his/her own time annually. Canadian physicians employ 0.7 clerical/administrative staff, spend 34 percent of their gross income for overhead, and trivial amounts of time on billing."

Here are some more numbers and facts for ya:

- 96% of Canadians prefer their system to that of the United States
- 89% rate care as good or excellent.
- Canadian physicians' income is comparable to those in the U.S. Physicians
- 85% Canadian doctors prefer their system to the United States system.

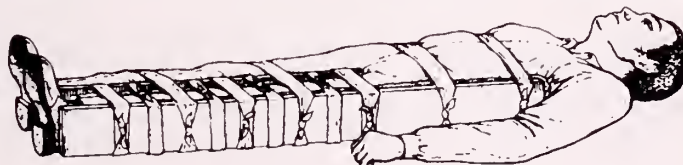
### The Condemned Speak

Single-payer has its legions of critics and enemies. They claim that installing a single-payer system in America would raise taxes significantly and create more bureaucracy. They believe that small reforms will do more to remedy problems. As the Business Council for Healthcare Competition states, "Universal health care coverage is a goal better achieved through an innovative market-based approach." Yes, the magic of the market to the rescue again. Too bad the only ones rescued are usually wealthy and can afford high-quality health care.

Many defend managed care and the U.S. system. More often than not, they claim that managed care saves Americans money in health care costs. After all, HMOs were touted for their cost-effectiveness in the first place. Uwe E. Reinhardt, a professor at Princeton University, believes "That's a major achievement. And the managed care industry deserves our greatest thanks for that." Yet costs are back on the rise. Many HMOs are calling for premium increases of 15 percent on average, with some paying more.

Proponents say that managed care ultimately boost profits by providing premium quality care. *Boston Globe* reporter Alex Pham says

managed care earns high marks and public approval "thanks to managed care's philosophy that prevention saves money in the long run." And some will cite the great force that is the market will improve health care.



Such folks argue the problem is that the market has not been allowed to function properly.

Yet most people (those not monetarily benefiting from the health care system) demand change, including those providing the care. "Don't look now but practicing good medicine has become a crime. The corporate puppeteers continue to have great success in pulling their doctors' strings," says Dr. Ronald Bronow, a Los Angeles physician and president of Physicians Who Care. Arizona physician Shelley C. Giebel, concurs, "I didn't go to medical school to become an insurance agent."

The cat's out of the bag, and there isn't anything the insurance companies can do to get the screaming kitty back in. The American health care system suffers a grave illness. We must inject the cure or let it die a slow death, a fatal process that will surely bring too many people with it.

**Want more info? Contact these folks:**

*Universal Health Care Action Network:*

1-800-634-4442; [www.uhcan.org](http://www.uhcan.org)

*Physicians For A National Health Program:* (312)554-0382;

[www.pnhp.org](http://www.pnhp.org)

*Physicians That Care: HMO Page*

[www.hmopage.org](http://www.hmopage.org)

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"Who's Left Out of Health Care Reform?" *Action For Universal*

*Health Care*



Previos to last December's explosion in Seattle, John Zerzan's name was known mostly to those on the margins of the anarchist movement who argued that rather than building a utopian society on the structure of the old, civilization itself was the culprit for human misery and had to be abolished.

Zerzan, writing in anarchist publications such as *Detroit's Fifth Estate* and *Anarchy from Columbia, Missouri*, argues that mediations of direct human experience, as varied as agriculture, time, art, and speech itself, create an ensemble of alienating techniques that become the institution of civilization.

Following riots in Zerzan's home town of Eugene, Oregon, last year, and the alleged participation of young anarchists from that city in

the trashing of corporate property during the anti-WTO demonstrations, the 57-year-old author was seen by the media as the grey imminence behind the youthful militancy. The New York Times dubbed him an "anarchist guru," and the Newsweek issue following Seattle displayed a collage under the title, "The New Anarchists," featuring photos of Emma Goldman, Noam Chomsky, Chumbawamba,



What is the choice? Is it insane to ponder a totally different view or are we going to stick with this one which seems to be more pathological and more of a dead end every time you read the papers?

*Rage Against the Machine, the Unabomber and Zerzan.*

Zerzan is the editor of several collections of essays including two of his own writings, *Future Primitive*, and the recently released second edition of *Elements of Refusal (C.A.L. Press, POB 1446, Columbia, Missouri, 1999, \$15)*. He is also the editor of two readers, *Questioning Technology*, and his latest, *Against Civilization: Readings and Reflections (Uncivilized Books, PO Box 11331, Eugene, Oregon, 97440, 1990, \$10)*. The latter contains essays by authors as varied as Rousseau and the



# ELEMENTS OF REFUSAL

an interview with John Zerzan  
by Peter Werbe

*Unabomber:*

*Clamor talked to Zerzan at his home in Eugene.*

Clamor: Is there a tradition of literature which stands in opposition to civilization?

John Zerzan: Yes, indeed. In fact, my latest book is comprised of 51 different voices, including ones that go all the way back to the ancient Greeks; there definitely is quite a tradition. Also, the idea of a Golden Age is almost a cultural universal. There's a longing expressed in many different ways and religions giving expression to the sense that people want to go back to a place before civilization.

Clamor: Give us a working definition for civilization as you use in this discussion.

Zerzan: The two pillars of civilization are the division of labor and domestication—domestication even more specifically as it relates to agriculture—as opposed to the way people previously lived in a hunter/gatherer mode of existence. Interest in examining civilization critically has been fueled by what has become anthropology and archeology orthodoxy in recent decades. This new orthodoxy completely reverses the 17th century paradigm of pre-civilization that we've had since the time of English philosopher Thomas Hobbes' view that life before the state and organized society was "nasty, brutish and short."—precarious and benighted. Now, the standard view sounds like a utopian model that sees life before civilized states and agriculture arose defined by egalitarianism, gender equality, no hierarchy, an absence of organized violence, and lots of leisure time, health and robusticity.

Clamor: You're not saying go back to the caves or the teepees, or are you?

Zerzan: Well, yes, I think so. It's not only the positive view of what we now understand as the reality of pre-civilized or non-civilized life, but it's also the negative that makes this view more cogent. In other words, it is daily life that has become so awful, and not just in the Balkans, but here and now. When you think of the booming teen suicide rates in the past few years, everybody increasingly on Paxil and Prozac, and school children shooting each other, not to mention the fact that the biosphere has maybe 20,30,40 years left...

What is the choice? Is it insane to ponder a totally different view or are we going to stick with this one which seems to be more pathological and more of a dead end every time you read the papers?

Clamor: So, you would actually advocate then a reduction or elimination of industrial-petro-chemical-nuclear society? In other words, the entire basis for modern society; get rid of it?

Zerzan: I think so. It's a death trip. It does sound very outlandish to think outside this model of this society, but look where it has brought us and look where it is bringing us with increasing velocity toward a very bad end on every level—the personal, the social, the environmental; it's just not working.

Clamor: Wouldn't a removal of what we consider to be the infrastructure of civilization, given the fact that we are all domesticated to it, create a massive die off?

Zerzan: That is probably the biggest question, and the most diffi-

cult one. I'm not totally sure about the answer. Suggesting the dire consequences of moving away from industrial society is kind of a scare tactic to keep us from thinking about it as a possibility. Not that it isn't a valid question.

But there is starvation all over the world right now. Given the set up of the global system, it doesn't even work on its own terms. So it's not so clear. When you look at certain realities, for example, in this country, if you took the population and the amount of available land just in the United States you could have 25 acres per person. A transition period would be the hardest and would be the most obvious problem because so many people live in cities. But you can get a lot of food out of a very small amount of land by using Permaculture techniques and other approaches like that which might be part of the solution to the starvation question.

Clamor: Even if we could do this, many people are going to say that I know the native people here in Michigan lived in teepees throughout the winter, but personally I would rather have central heat.

Zerzan: Well, so would I. It is kind of hard to conceive of life without modern amenities. We are all used to a lot of things that are not so healthy or unalienated, and I'm not so sure that I could make the transition. I'm not saying that I live like that now; I certainly don't. But I think you can imagine what it is to be in contact with nature. The whole trajectory of civilization moves us away from that connection. This estrangement is what is causing the death of nature, for one thing.

It is hard to imagine that suddenly, boom!, you are in a totally different relationship with the world, but I don't know if it's that crazy to start thinking about reconnecting. We are driven by the materiality of time which now is so maddening, so palpable. When you think of what we could get rid of and how qualitatively different and superior it might be, it is something to ponder. But to jump right off to living outside of central heating, I grant you it's kind of a shock to think of.

Clamor: What about the idea, dare I say, of reform. How about just going back to the technology of 1939? At least we would be rid of atomic weapons and television. Yet we would still have electric guitars, radio, automobiles, and central heating. Does it make any sense to unravel the worst of what civilization has created since it's difficult to imagine a return to pre-civilized forms of living?

Zerzan: That's an awfully big challenge, and I'm not so sure that if we could go back 50 or 60 years or so, it wouldn't be just as easy to make a total break. If you were still dealing with the same categories and dynamics of the technological system, it might not be any more difficult to break the whole reason that it's this way to begin with. In other words, how would that happen any more feasibly than just getting rid of the whole business? That's something in the *Unabomber's Manifesto*. He says, when you think of all the energy over reform, and reform doesn't seem to be working even slightly any more, maybe you could get rid of the whole stinking business with the same amount of energy.

Clamor: Very few people would agree that the whole business is stinking. Most people would think, if we have teen suicides, we ought to address that problem. If we have environmental degradation, we ought to solve that. If there are wars, we should end them, and so forth. Let's



Suggesting the dire consequences of moving away from industrial society is kind of a scare tactic to keep us from thinking about it as a possibility.

address these problems that we have within the current context. They would say, John Zerzan, you are throwing the baby out with the bath water.

Zerzan: I think there is a unity to all those problems. They are all basically generated by the fundamental categories of the dominant system which is a world system.

If we could just address them singly, separately, cut off from where they come from, that would be fine, but the reason they are proliferating, the reason why society looks more malignant all the time, is precisely because you can't do that. It just doesn't work.

Clamor: I think there is a popular sense in this country that things are not going well in general. People increasingly retreat from public life and get into the personal in terms of their jobs, their family, or their hobbies, etc., and if you asked them if they watched the Clinton impeachment or the war in Kosovo, they would say, no, I'm watching World Wrestling Federation. Do you think there is a massive amount of denial happening?

Zerzan: Undoubtedly. It's becoming such an obvious thing. Inwardness in itself is not bad, but the inwardness that you mentioned, the flying off into all notions of rescue which completely refuse what's going on in the real world, suggest it's all happening in a vacuum. There are a million healing techniques that you can see in any paper, and they're booming because there is so much pain and so much damage, so much psychic immiseration. They're being generated endlessly by the very system that creates the misery. It's very understandable, just as fundamentalism is growing around the world, as are all religions, not only Christianity, but Judaism and Muslim fundamentalism and all the rest of them. It's a response, but it's not a very healthy one because it doesn't really look at reality. But the extremism of it is just one more indication of how bad things are getting.

Clamor: An obscure French theorist, Jacques Camatte, said we live in a society that has run away. That it is no longer under the control of humans in the sense of us having the capacity to make change, that the industrial system has so integrated all of us into it, domesticated all of us, to use your words, that people are almost incapable of living differently and at the same time, as you indicated, it is eroding the physical basis of life on the planet. That's a pretty dire picture. Is there room for optimism?

Zerzan: I think there is in a kind of ironic way. As things get so bad, it makes people start to question their denial and ask how far would we have to go to change things to make them better. There is a total ban on this kind of thinking. It's not part of the respectable, acceptable discourse of society. You won't find it in the media, and yet it's there in people's minds.

I did some talk shows a few years ago about the Unabomber, and I was afraid people would only want to talk about who he is, and keep the discussion on a crime story level. Actually, no one did. They wanted to talk about the critique of modern society, about how things could be different, how would we get there, and yet there is no experience with

these ideas, because they're blocked out. That's part of the denial. What we call politics in this country is so absurd—the gaping, yawning, stark facts of how fucked up things are. You never hear that. That's never an issue. And yet it just comes pouring out whenever there is any kind of a forum for it. That's what's heartening to me. It's there, you just won't find it in the mainstream media.

Clamor: One of the reasons I would recommend your book is that it offers voices that most people probably haven't heard before, including ideas you mentioned earlier about how writers viewed primitive societies. One essay in it that I have always liked is by the anthropologist Marshall Sahlins, who was at the University of Michigan, entitled "The Original Affluent Society." As you said, rather than life being "nasty, brutish and short," as Hobbes contended, it was the exact opposite for most pre-technological people.

## Saving the World For Free

Mark Restall and Vincent Romano share international perspectives on volunteerism and non-profit work

Volunteering is the United Kingdom's second favourite pastime (if you think you know the favorite you guessed wrong). Forty-eight of the adult population volunteers in the UK. This may seem surprising, but volunteering is more than the stereotype of a few upper middle class ladies knitting socks for those poor souls who short-sightedly grew up in sub-Saharan Africa. People volunteer in sports clubs, museums, churches, social clubs – we even have volunteer police officers, just like in Police Academy III, only funnier.

Ok, so what? Well, for the last year I've been a volunteer information officer at the National Centre for Volunteering. I'm there four days a week, so people assume I'm a real enthusiast, but to be honest I'm extremely ambiguous about volunteering and the voluntary sector as a whole. As an anarchist or libertarian socialist or whatever it is that I am, concepts such as self-help and mutual aid are quite central to what I believe. I welcome activity that develops outside of government and the business world. However, it seems to me that much of what we call volunteering is being used by the public and private sectors for their own ends.

Two-and-a-half years ago the British kicked out the universally despised Tories and voted in a Labour government under Tony Blair. Blair introduced a policy of using buzzwords to make it sound like he has important things to say. Several of them have implications for the voluntary sector. His big idea is "The Third



Zerzan: Yes. Sahlins was a big influence on me. When we discussed these things years ago it was the beginning of the breakthrough in the dominant thinking in anthropology. His concept is simply that if your needs are met you are not poor even if you don't have hardly anything in terms of the material goods that contemporary people are flooded by. Sahlins pointed out that as you get more and more stuff, you have less and less autonomy, authenticity and leisure time.

Clamor: I'm sure some people, or maybe even many, may share some of the criticisms and critiques of the world you've put forth, but at the same time would probably think the idea of ending all civilization sounds a little nuts. But as I was thinking that, I was wondering how nuts is it to think that we can end war or any other problem within the current context?

Zerzan: Is there any issue or any category that is improving, whether it's racism, sexism, you name it. If it were possible to say, well, we are

going to tackle this problem and then another, that might be nice; but, it seems to me, there is no prospect whatsoever for doing it successfully.

Clamor: I think the promulgation of ideas, the putting out there of different ways of looking at the world, is very important. But what can one do today if you are against civilization?

Zerzan: This sounds modest, but if there could be the beginnings of a public discussion on these issues, we might find that we could all get together and really start to do something. But there is a ban on fundamental questions that ask, where the heck are we, and what is the nature of this whole global culture.

I think the most important opening step would be just to break that open and say we have to address this and stop running after this symptom and that symptom and talk about the fundamental stuff and that could be the beginning of something that would make the movement of the 60s look like just nothing whatsoever. ☺

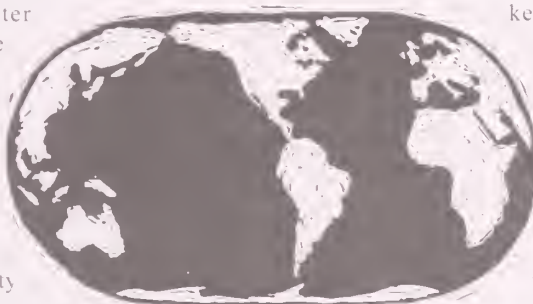
Way", generally taken to be a middle path either between socialism and conservatism or the state and the market. "Social exclusion" is the preferred term above "poverty" or "inequality". There is also "active citizenship" or "active community" but not too active, as I'll explain later. Even this article is committing the new thought crime of "cynicism". Anyone who questions Blair is vilified as a destructive social maddo.

This language obviously lends itself to the support of volunteering. There have been several initiatives announced to encourage people to volunteer, such as the Millennium Volunteer scheme<sup>2</sup> and ONI:20<sup>3</sup>. There is also a "voluntary sector" option as part of the New Deal for unemployed 16-24-year-olds. Jobless people in this age group end up having to choose between four options: a subsidized job, training, education, "environmental" work (often the same tasks petty criminals get sentenced to do) and "volunteering". If they turn down all of these options they face losing part of their dole money. So now we have the oxymoron of compulsory voluntary work, with voluntary organizations having to play cop and monitor people who most likely don't want to be there in the first place.

I'm not against government supporting and promoting volunteering, far from it. The problem is the way the agenda is set. We have "good" volunteering and "bad" volunteering. An interesting case study is the treatment of the Exodus Collective. They are a group of people who came together to put on free raves in and around their home town of Luton. They squatted in an abandoned hospital and renovated it to provide homes for homeless people. They were quickly evicted. They moved to an old farm and built homes out of

donated wood and their own skill and perseverance. They tried to set up a legal nonprofit community center, but were blocked by members of the local council. In frustration they squatted in a warehouse to house the center anyway, and were again evicted, despite the fact that the place was in a better state than when they found it. The farm was raided for drugs. Although a quantity was found, a jury came to the conclusion that the drugs were planted by the police. One member was spuriously arrested for murder. The charge was later dropped to a series of lesser (but still serious charges), and he was found innocent on all counts. The collective promotes peaceful community action and regeneration, and are surely the model of "active citizens" according to Blair's definition, but have received nothing but hassle from the authorities<sup>4</sup>.

My concern is that, for the government, volunteering is a useful way to fill in the gaps left by an economy that isn't based on human values. As important as they are, I don't believe voluntary groups are a substitute for a more equal distribution of wealth and power. People getting involved in their local neighbourhoods *will* acquire more control over their own lives, but unless wider changes occur throughout society, to misquote the title of a pamphlet I once saw, there will simply be slightly larger cages, slightly longer leashes. Better than nothing, but the message from the top is very clearly "this far and no further."



For the voluntary world, the state is only half the story. Corporate funding has become more and more important. It dictates the agenda as cash strapped organizations chase money. To give one clear example, a key focus of my organization's work is what is known as "Employer Supported Volunteering", ESV for short. Companies give staff time off to volunteer, often arranging projects in local schools and so on. You can view this as PR gloss, or a sincere attempt to locate firms as citizens in their local areas. In either case the problem is this amounts to is the encouragement of middle class people to volunteer, when we know from our own figures that these are the people who volunteer most anyway<sup>5</sup>. Rather than promoting volunteering in working class areas, where people could help themselves, we have a kind of return to 19th century paternalism, with corporations posing as generous philanthropists.

This also means that the Centre ends up in bed with people like Shell, BP Amoco, Unilever and Whitbread<sup>6</sup>. On occasion I've had to hide in the toilets to avoid having to be civil to someone from an odious multinational. Incidentally, these companies' commitment to volunteering wavers when you mention trade unionism, which is a major voluntary activity. I also get the impression that big firms like volunteering because they see it as a way of reducing state involvement in society and therefore the potential for redistributive

measures.

Having said all this, I am very pro-volunteering, especially what is known as "informal volunteering", that is stuff that is done outside of large organizations, often spontaneously or without the participants considering themselves to be volunteers. And don't forget that political activism is voluntary work. People don't volunteer because they're saints. They volunteer to learn new skills, to meet people and to increase their chances of finding paid employment. Whatever the reason, through volunteering they're taking an active part in their own lives and communities, whether it's blockading the financial district of

a city or helping young people to read. To me, this is the promise of volunteering: the creation of a truly democratic culture, ensuring that active citizenship becomes more than just the tagline to a soundbite.

Oh, by the way, the favorite pastime in the UK is dancing.

Mark Restall

<sup>1</sup> Davis Smith, Justin, (1998), *1997 National Survey of Volunteering*, Institute for Volunteering Research

<sup>2</sup> The Millennium Volunteer scheme is aimed at 16-24 year olds. They pledge to do 200 hours of voluntary work over

the course of a year.

<sup>3</sup> ONE20 is an initiative to promote volunteering.

<sup>4</sup> For the full extraordinary story see [www.squall.org](http://www.squall.org), or if you don't have net access write to me and I'll send you the hard copy.

<sup>5</sup> According to the *1997 National Survey of Volunteering*, 65% of professional / managerial and 51% of other non-manual workers volunteer, whereas 43% of semi-skilled, and 36% of unskilled manual workers do.

<sup>6</sup> They're a brewing company based in Luton. Their chairman has links with the local police, and it's been alleged that this relationship has been a factor behind the targeting of Exodus. Luton pubs reported a 40% drop in trade every time Exodus put on a rave.

## ***Socially-Responsible? or Counter-Productive? Non-Profit Organizations and Social Change***

Unemployment has gotten a bad rap in this society, and that's a real shame. Sure, without a job, there's always the creeping possibility of hunger and homelessness – and American paranoia about these fates, currently manifested in scorn towards all poor (welfare or punk) trash, harks back at least to the Great Depression. Yet I am presently unemployed, and I know that grants (relative) freedom from our systems of exploitation, and the opportunity to think and act more effectively as a revolutionary. Eventually, though, I will need to get another job to support myself, hopefully, the kind of job where if I have to have a job, at least it's doing something socially responsible.

Four years out of school, I've had a checkered history with "socially responsible" jobs already. I entered college thoroughly brainwashed, preparing to pursue a PhD and live a comfortable middle class life. Somewhere along the line, thanks to some (surprisingly) subversive education, those goals were derailed. I knew I never wanted to work for any corporation, and set my sights on finding a job where I could do some good for the world – preferably as a professional activist in the peace movement. Why couldn't I make a living doing what I loved – educating, demonstrating, agitating?

Non-profit organizations were my new calling, and while I looked for the perfect job I suffered through degrading conditions in retail, rather than pursue one of the many openings for college grads with Westchester County New York-based Mastercard, Texaco, IBM, International Paper or PepsiCo. I soon found out that not every non-profit is ethical when I landed at the FSC/DISC Tax Association for a year. What I thought was a simple administrative office job turned out to serve all of those corporations as clients, instructing them how they legally could not pay a large share of their taxes by setting up offshore paper subsidiaries! This was corporate welfare at its worst, and my first lesson was that a "non-profit" could make money hand over fist, as long as it served "educational" purposes and severely restricted its lobbying activities (the corporate PACs could take care of that themselves).

Believe me, I got out of there as fast as I could – not fast enough to keep all of my spirit intact, but with extra motivation to find a really good job doing good. (If I had any guts, I'd have tried some on-the-job sabotage, but it's been difficult overcoming my training to be a nice boy.) In the past three years, I've bounced between a handful of do-gooder organizations. It's often said about these places: you see how bad the world is? Think how much worse off we'd be if they didn't exist! Sometimes, I wonder.

A thumbnail sketch is in order here. As an intern at the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), I wrote for Fellowship magazine and organized a series of actions to combat the Iraq sanctions and bombings. FOR is the oldest international interfaith pacifist organization in the world. I also interned for its secular sister, the War Resisters League (WRL), helping with its Day Without the Pentagon demo and YouthPeace

program. Next, I edited manuals at World Hunger Year (WHY), a national network of anti-poverty organizations that strives to help replicate the attributes of successful model programs around the country. I just was laid off from the Coalition for an International Criminal Court (CICC), working as a media publicist for a coalition of over 800 non-governmental organizations (NGOs – the other often-used term for do-gooder nonprofits) trying to establish a permanent United Nations war crimes court. Finally, I've worked briefly for Sierra Club canvassing wealthy neighborhoods to raise funds, and I also volunteer extensively for the Westchester People's Action Coalition (WESPAC), the peace and social justice group for the county (it has only one paid position, and I wasn't able to land it).

Through these organizations I've also worked intimately with other major players in the nonprofit field: American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), International Action Center, Pax Christi, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, etc. Yep, New York City certainly does have a lot of nonprofits.

So why is it that I can't escape the feeling that New York, as a scene of revolutionary political action, is virtually dead? Oh, sure, these organizations have a demonstration now and then, always in reaction to the latest bomb-dropping or police brutality episode of the state. We hand out our radical literature and participate in the congressional call-ins. Yet when I read stuff in activist papers about Eugene, Arcata, Montpelier, Philadelphia, they all seem so much more vibrant than my hometown. If New York is the capital of the world, shouldn't it also be the capital of resistance? Isn't New York supposed to be a bastion of East coast liberalism?

Liberal is the key word here. I have found that, more often than not, while most of the people staffing these organizations are well-read and quite enlightened in terms of different struggles and the need for some kind of revolution, their actions are almost always of a reformist nature. Their idealism is tempered by pragmatism, which sometimes translates into patronizing attitudes toward youthful energy and new ideas. Mostly white in staff and membership, I've observed many of them desire to be inclusive of people of color, but often fail as well as grapple with racial tensions internally. The salaries for most staff members are usually low, but certainly higher than working class wages, and fit folks who typically come from a background of social privilege comfortably within the middle class.

I realize that there is no one "perfect" nonprofit organization, but lately I'm questioning whether *any* of them are really on the right track. Are these organizations the social change movement, or are they only a part of it, of greater or lesser importance? How important are they to the process of social change? How relevant are they to society at large? Note how most commonly go by clunky names and acronyms that are hard for many folks to retain, and are rendered meaningless to the public



conscious. Maybe the easiest step we could take would be to simplify the names of these organizations to catchy ones that can inspire broader numbers of people: "Peace Now!" "Equality!" "One World"... you brainstorm!

Perhaps I'm a tad cynical (do you think?), and simply frustrated that for any step forward we take, there's five backwards sure to follow. Yet one would think that when our methods fail to achieve substantive change, we might try to learn from these experiences and not rationalize in so many ways that it's society's/government's/corporations' fault, and we can only continue with the same tried-and-true methods. Below, I've identified some of the key problems/catch-22s that I think are crippling nonprofits from hastening any sort of revolution. Not every issue is a hang-up for every organization. I won't badmouth any organization by name, but neither will I balance my criticisms with the positive side, which they will be only too happy to tell you about (on glossy tri-color brochures) to get you to sign up.

### **Nonprofit dinosaurs.**

As they get older and bigger, nonprofits tend to take fewer risks to preserve the identity of their very centralized organizations. Since they are well-established and have proven track records of successes in ameliorating some of the world's most grievous problems, they are able to spend money on huge membership prospecting mailings, largely to raise funds to sustain themselves with more direct mailings and donations. The access to power that some giant nonprofits achieve often co-opts them, and they become the cheerleaders for government action or turn their eyes away from certain problems. For example, one large human rights organization not only supported NATO's "humanitarian intervention" in Kosovo after meeting with the State Department, it also refused for several years to clearly denounce the human rights violations caused by the genocidal U.S./U.N. economic sanctions on Iraq.

### **Source of funds.**

It is unclear to me how a nonprofit that accepts major funding from the U.S. government, which has amply demonstrated its lack of desire to do anything but mitigate some of the worst excesses of capitalism, is going to fulfill its mission to end hunger. Likewise, it perplexes me why an organization that accepts major funding from the European Union believes that it will establish an effective international criminal court, when the EU countries insist they would never allow their leaders to stand trial for war crimes. The EU just committed war crimes in Kosovo, as did NATO. I'm also unsure how organizations that raise funds independently through their members, but invest those funds in "socially responsible" corporations on the stock market, are going to change the fundamental structures of oppression and consumerism driving this society.

### **Nonprofit 501(c)3 status.**

To a large degree, this may be the essence of the matter. Besides receiving legitimacy from the government, acquiring this designation offers all sorts of benefits – such as the ability to do bulk mailings cheaply and offer tax deductions for contributions. Nonprofits are required to have a board of directors and board meetings, which directly reproduces the corporate top-down model of organization. These boards can be quite removed from the locus of action and yet still set policy – acting on what the organization "needs" rather than what the world needs. Financial concerns dominate, powerful blocs often musele through their way in decision-making processes, and caution almost always gets the better part of valor. One organization even changed its mission statement when the IRS threatened to revoke its 501(c)3 "privilege," because it suggested that people had the right of conscience to not pay their taxes. Presently, the institution continues to surrender its tax assessment and pay for all the things it supposedly stands against.

### **Corporate culture.**

The staff members in charge, and those who seek to be in charge (surprise, surprise), along with those who simply can't conceive of a functioning anarchist society and are thoroughly ingrained with the val-

ues of the present system, maintain that hierarchy is the most efficient means of getting things done. Junior staff and membership are supposed to allow for this because at least our leaders are benevolent (unlike those bad guys running the corporations). Of course, this extends to the division of labor, the culture of compulsive overwork, and how unorthodox opinions are received as well. Sometimes there are discussions (euphemistically called "consultative decision-making") that serve to mask the fact that the ultimate decision comes from the executive or the board; or else voting permits the tyranny of the majority. Consensus is considered an ideal that is impractical. Currently, one nonprofit is even seeking to legally punish its membership cell for doing some quasi-independent work and fundraising.

### **Priorities.**

Sadly, with too many social change nonprofits, I have witnessed fundraising, administration, and office work trump action on many occasions. Staff members sometimes feel like they can't participate in other groups' demonstrations – or even support the work of others within their own organization, if it means taking a short subway trip or drive out of the office – because that would take them away from their own "important" work. Flexibility with deadlines during times of crisis is a virtue that is hard to find among some self-important career nonprofit folks. I was told by one supervisor that the staff would not participate in a demonstration (after the end of the working day) against the Desert Fox bombing of Iraq, because of more pressing matters. An evaluation of a demonstration it had held two months before was at hand. I was prevented from attending myself and made to answer phones during this meeting (phones that never rang). I was even scolded for helping to organize a local coalition against the war during work time, which was "outside the bounds" of my responsibilities which were usually limited to photocopying and word processing, so the senior staff could do their "more important" work.

### **Methods.**

In the great debate of working within or outside the system, nonprofits almost always side with staying on the safe side of the law. Certainly, there is room in our movement for a diversity of tactics. Yet, should that not also extend to our social change organizations, instead of keeping a false division? Nonprofits lobby, file suits, educate, and do legal demos (or, at best, civil disobedience that is more ritualistic than a threat to power). They leave the rabble-rousing work to others. Staff members of nonprofits say that they can't risk arrest because they can't work from jail. Instead, they search for "simple" actions that everyone can do, like creating perforated postcards to sign and send to the agents of our ire – not very empowering. Yet another practice is focusing on getting "big" movement names involved in nonprofit projects, rather than really organizing the grassroots. It is no wonder that we are lucky if we are able to drum up a few dozen people to attend our events. One nonprofit aims to make the world know about its project, and was primarily relying on (hopefully) obtaining free airplay for a high-budget television public service announcement. This is not necessarily a bad idea, but the organization coordinator rejected out-of-hand another idea for an international bus tour (stopping in many cities to hold rallies and popular events) as "not our style."

### **Effectiveness.**

Nonprofits exert an inordinate amount of effort to develop educational materials. Again, this is important, but considering the length of time it will take for this information to slowly percolate through society (if it even achieves exposure to wide audiences, and if anyone besides the already converted will read it), it is amazing how elitist this focus is. Why do we in the movement spend so much time talking to ourselves? Splitting philosophical hairs is another infamous obstacle to effective organizing, while real strategic thinking is perhaps the last thing on action planners' minds. For example, while some demonstrators once complained to me about their lack of success in handing out leaflets to rushing commuters entering Grand Central Terminal, none could fathom that

# A HOLIDAY FOR EVERYONE: MAY DAY 2000



"Hearken the Future, Remember the Past!"

Casey Neill.

article by Joshua Rumschlag

those same commuters would be much more likely to read a flyer if they found it lying on their seat when they got to the train (which was mildly risky and therefore unpalatable). Are we going to reach and impress new people if we clap and sing movement songs every time a cop leads someone passively away at a civil disobedience action? Finally, why is it that our coalitions struggle to reduce our agreements to the least common denominator, making our message devoid of almost any meaning or inter-group solidarity? The alliance of New York nonprofits on the Iraq sanctions flopped because it was uninspiring, and each organization preferred to fade away after a high point rather than plan consistent, coordinated action. Coalitions will fail as long as each nonprofit continues to make its own agenda most important (until the next crisis happens).

## **Privilege.**

Sometimes the most banal details are telling about how in tune nonprofits are with struggles besides their own. Despite the environmental perspective I've tried to bring to various nonprofits, it was amazing how much resistance I received to little things like re-using paper in the fax machine, reducing paper waste (e.g. not making 20 copies of ordinary meeting memos), and getting (more expensive) recycled paper. Nor could most staff members be bothered to implement environmental steps on an individual level. Another organization bought five new air conditioners and ran them full-blast during the summer, 24 hours a day. When it comes to either subverting or maintaining the systems of inequality and resource depletion, nonprofits often make no fuss about doing things the easy, unchallenging way.

## **Institutions vs. organizations.**

Assuredly, every nonprofit can reference a handful of significant successes from its past to justify its continued work. However, I've worked for a couple of organizations that rely on this history so heavily that it obscures how lame their present capacity is. Entrenched nonprofits

In the wake of Seattle, we are left confused and horrified yet excited and energized. Many may not be aware, but stopping the World Trade Organization was the first big win for grassroots organizations in years. Finally, a battle where all kinds of groups could come together. Bonds and connections between diverse people were made. The objectionable idea of a "police state" was even accepted as people were beaten and pepper-sprayed. Residents of Seattle saw it first hand and finally understood. This was the political birth of a new generation of activists and anarchists worldwide.

This reminds me of a renowned anarchist/feminist who had this same transformation. In 1886, Emma Goldman was a young immigrant, when a general strike for the eight hour work day began. Just two years earlier, American Federation of Labor announced "eight hours shall constitute a legal day's work from and after May 1, 1886." By this the day was set, and many other unions joined the pledge for a general strike. In Chicago, the heart of the movement, the Illinois National Guard was called in, with a brand new \$2,000 machine gun, courtesy of Chicago's Commercial Club (it's funny that business already controlled government over a hundred years ago, and we are just finally now accepting it as truth). Police fired into a crowd of McCormick Harvester Machine strikers just two days later, killing one, wounding six others. A mass meeting was called for the next day in Haymarket Square in protest of this brutality. During the last speaker, with about 200 people left in the rain, almost 200 police marched into the square and ordered everyone to disperse. A bomb exploded and police fired into the crowd, killing many.

may have name recognition, but they also may have lost the dynamism that comes from being a freshly-formed organization. Thomas Jefferson said, only ten years after the American Revolution, "I hold it that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing...It is a medicine necessary for the sound health of government....God forbid that we should ever be twenty years without such a rebellion." Of course, the powers that be, then and today, have never been very keen on that saying. Nor would most nonprofits be supportive of the sentiment — but maybe they should be.

Are all the things that nonprofits do basically good, and the criticisms I have raised only minor, inevitable drawbacks? Or are nonprofits really flawed at their very essence? If nonprofits mimic in many ways the dominant culture they espouse to oppose, how will they send a clear, revolutionary message? Allowing staff members to dress casual is well and good, but that is merely the beginning of creating a new culture.

What are the alternatives? Decentralization of decision-making power; independent fund-raising that is invested in less profitable but more sustainable community trusts; real canvassing that pounds the pavement, especially in lower-income neighborhoods; ending ageist patronization of youth; doing away with some of the fluff — and that's just for starters. Let's drop some of the "responsibilities" that weigh us down and live with a little insecurity, as free agents truly living on the frontier of social change. It seems to me that we who work for social change in general, and in the nonprofit field in particular, ought to set our own houses in order before we attempt new grandiose projects to save the world. It will be a process, mayhap a long one, but surely not as long as the far-off revolution we await. Aren't we ready to accept a little self-criticism? Then again, if we radically transform and overturn the nonprofits, where am I going to work? Maybe the real movement for social change will be led by the unemployed. ☿



Eight of the most well-known organizers were then arrested during massive raids, charged with throwing the bomb and quickly convicted. The state attorney announced, "Make the raids first and look up the law afterward!" Four of the men, Albert Parsons, George Engel, Adolf Fischer, and August Spies, were hung on Nov. 11, 1887. Louis Lingg committed suicide in prison. The largest funeral procession in Chicago's history, with 500,000 people attending, ended where a monument would be constructed for the Haymarket Martyrs. Finally, six years later, the remaining Samuel Fielden, Oscar Neebe, and Michael Schwab were pardoned by John Peter Altgeld, the governor of Illinois. He admitted the men's innocence



May Day Poster by artist Walter Crane, London, 1894

and said "we never discovered who it was that threw the bomb which killed the policeman, and the evidence does not show any connection whatsoever between the defendants and the man who threw it." The United States then declared May 1 "Law Day," in an attempt to "forget" its history and significance, while the rest of the world celebrates it as International Labor Day.

This is not the first time this has happened. May Day dates back far before this to a rite of passage/festive holy day known as Beltane or the day of fire. The Celts and Saxons of pagan Europe celebrated this as the end of winter, the first spring planting day. It was a time of great celebration when people would head to the forest and mountains, and return days later with newly cut trees for maypoles. Atop these trees ribbons were tied and dancing would weave the ribbons around the pole leading many to a new "lover." Because this was a time of temporary sexual liaisons which were not normally permitted in society, the Catholic church outlawed May Day while many peasants still celebrated it. For the Celts, it was a day for the god and goddess of the hunt, Harn and Diana. As agrarian society took hold, so did the new deities of fertility, the Queen of May, Brigit or Bridey and Green Man or Robin Goodfellow, later known as Robin Hood. Robin Goodfellow, the Lord of Misrule, and his followers would make local authorities, priests and lords, the "butt of jokes," for this was a time when position in so-

ciety was temporarily suspended. This was not looked kindly upon during times of rebellion and was banned by the Puritans with an act of Parliament in 1644.

Thus May Day has always been a day when societal rules are temporarily suspended, a chance to remember what once was and is still possible today, **SOCIAL EQUALITY AND SEXUAL FREEDOM**. It's no surprise that that labor chose this day in 1884, and that now Peoples' Global Action reclaims it as the International Day of Action Against Globalization. In the wake of the World Bank, May 1 (M1) will be a day of action, celebration, and reclamation of a suppressed history of resistance predating our written history. It will be celebrated with events world wide in Sydney, Australia; Toronto, Canada; London, UK; Chicago, Madison, New York, Washington D.C., Seattle, Eugene, San Francisco, Richmond, Gainesville, and New Orleans, USA. Let's make this one hell of a "Law Day!" ¶

For more information or to get involved, check out these sites:

<http://geocities.com/maydayflorida/>  
<http://mayday2k.org> <http://agp.org>  
<http://go.to/mayday2000>

To be added to International mailing list (English):  
[mayday2k@onelist.com](mailto:mayday2k@onelist.com)

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## May Days: Resistance and Rebellion by Peter Tsolkas.

While recognizing and celebrating May Day as a significant part of the historical struggles for freedom, there are some events other than the Chicago Haymarket Affair that are very worthy of being kept alive through our celebrations and activities. The risk of forgetting the efforts of those in the past also means the risk of taking steps backwards in our own efforts for freedom and social justice today.

- On May 1, 1871, in Paris, government troops entered what was known as the Paris Commune, a 2 1/2 month occupation. Anarchist writer, Kropotkin, called it a "...point of departure of future revolution." The barricades were stormed and at least 30,000 communards were left dead in the aftermath.

-The May Days in Barcelona, Spain (May 2-7, 1937, also referred to as Bloodbath days) were a turning point in the Spanish Revolution. This was a beginning in intense repression and violence against anarchists and anti-fascists unwilling to submit to the Communist Party's plan. The Italian anarchists, Berneri and Barbieri, were murdered. Barricades and street fights were rampant and the effort put into collectivized land and factories and decentralized militias on the anti-fascist front was being undermined by the authoritarian left. Result: 500 dead; 1,500 wounded; revolutionary potential stolen by the state and by those who believe in it, in any form.

-Once again in Paris, this time May 1968, Workers and students strike and occupy parts of the city and university for about two weeks, in the most modern display of urban revolt. Inspired largely by radical groups such as the Situationist International and the Enrages, these are a few popular instances of the spirit of revolution and rebirth that are seen in the month of May and the season surrounding. That spirit is not only of the past and present and the future (if there is to be one). Hopefully you can get a taste of it. ¶



# Of Statesmen and Klansmen: For and Against Extremist Groups

by Richard Opalsky



White supremacy exists in this country both overtly and covertly. On every level, it needs to have its antithesis forcefully thrust against it. The permeation of white supremacy in the United States largely depends on its going unchallenged. Remember, racism is an ideology that must first be believed before it can be threatening. If educators, media, politicians, and people at large do not confront white supremacy, it will remain easy for its proponents to pass it off as a justifiable cause. The irony of white supremacy is that it is a reaction to a society that is already white

**On the 'grass-roots' level, the white supremacist groups feel that they need to independently organize against a government that is turning away from their best interests.**

supremacist. But the self-proclaimed white supremacists, the ones who wear the hoods, and sport the logos and slogans, see this country beginning to make small allowances for those people it has his-

torically oppressed. From this, they conclude that their government is turning against white people. On the grass roots level, the white supremacist groups feel that they need to independently organize against a government that is turning away from their best interests. Hence, white supremacists flare up in the face of affirmative action, the changing family structure, the temporal distance of the Jews from the Holocaust, and the idea that society needs to get closer to equal rights. The Mumia Abu-Jamal case, no doubt, has infuriated many a white supremacist, as they view it as a potential turning point upon which the state will protect a person of color and abandon their concerns.

Even if "we" all voted, it is quite clear that "we" would not be the American Government. 'We' would merely be more involved with "it". So, how can we, meaning "we the people" not "we the American government", combat white supremacy? Well, one thing that we can do is urge (via petitions, protests, boycotts, education, speech, alternative media and ballots) the government to impose regulations and restrictions on the constitutional rights of extremist groups that seek to overthrow it and cause injury to the people who live under it. Or, we can take the opposite approach and aim our activity against the state's imposition on anyone's rights. This route leaves it up to us to take it as our civic duty and speak/act out against white supremacy ourselves. Or, perhaps, we can combine the forces of state and 'people-power' to fight against hate-groups such as the KKK. In this column I shall argue two points: 1) That the only real democratic option is the second option from above—the one that makes no appeal to the state—and that we must oppose the state's regulation of "extremist

groups" with as much fervor as we would oppose the groups themselves. 2) That the state is an "extremist group" itself, reminding us of its institutional violence against thousands of its so-called people, and political infrastructure designed from the outset to never give 'us' sovereign power.

On October 23, 1999, the KKK came to New York City for their first organized New York City rally. A good friend of mine, and one of the brightest humans I've ever known, suggested an interesting idea for us to employ at the counter-demonstration. He suggested that I meet him there with my trumpet, more respectfully known as 'Don', and that he meet me there with a snare drum and some sticks. The idea was to get as close as possible to the KKK, and blast out some noisy horn and drum every time they tried to utter their spew through the bullhorn. I said that I'd think about it. Strange as it may sound, his humorous request forced me into two full days of serious consideration. In the end, my reply was "no". You see, the very success of his plan depended on our making the speech of the KKK inaudible... or just rendering it frustrated and indecipherable. The idea, although created by his unparalleled comic genius, was a clever and witty attempt to destroy their First Amendment rights. It is on these grounds that I declined his offer. But be careful not to misunderstand me—I am all too aware of the farce that is our constitution. A skeptic is well-advised to read Michael Parenti's book *Democracy for the Few* to learn how and why our U.S. Constitution was written by white, well-to-do males, and for their best (whoops I mean **self**) interests. This is an interesting and frightening topic in itself. Nonetheless, I don't think that the entirety of the Constitution's laws are corrupt and disposable. After all, even the white, well-to-do framers needed to secure certain basic rights. One of these basic rights is the right to speak freely without recourse to physical violence. The gathering of the KKK was intended to be strictly speech-based. To this, my friend made a simple but very serious rebuttal. He said: "Rich, you can't view the KKK's gathering as just any other speech-based event. The reason that their rights to free speech do not need to be protected by me, the state, or by anyone else, is because their ultimate objective entails killing me, deporting every person of color, and overthrowing the existing state for an Aryan nation modeled after Hitler's Germany!! I think this warrants our violating their First Amendment rights!!" In addition to this argument, it was added that the KKK has a history of violence that cannot be overlooked for the sake of upholding their constitutional rights. Yet, despite these objections, I could not sit comfortable with the plan. To understand my discomfort, let us first consider why the United States is an extremist group of the highest order, and see where that leaves us, the conscientious public.

Emma Goldman, feminist, labor and anti-prison activist, birth con-



trol advocate, and philosophical anarchist was seen by the state, and by most Americans, as an individual hailing a social movement whose aims were to overthrow the existing state, deconstruct the foundations of power and authoritarianism, and undermine the bedrock of Christianity in society. Emma Goldman was locked up in prison on countless occasions for giving speeches on birth control, anarchism, and feminism, so frequently, in fact, that she carried a book with her whenever she went to speak, just so she would have something to read in jail. The American government had so much of a problem with her words, that she was finally deported.

During Joe McCarthy's tenure, the government led large-scale investigations into alleged communist influences in American media and institutions. These were based on accusations of "disloyalty", which at that time meant "pro-communist". Most of the accusations were unsupported, or based on doubtful evidence. Ultimately, this was an attempt to restrict individual dissent or political criticism. Hence, to criticize the American government was considered a "disloyalty" punishable by law. The government's propaganda about the disasters of communism was ingenious and impressively effective. Schoolteachers, not hired or trained by the federal government, were voluntarily teaching kids about the potential horrors of communism. Communism, of course, is a political theory, a belief system, a wish to put into practice a better way of governing large societies and nations. Its essential objective is to overcome the schism of economic class and treat the entire polis as a community whereby every person's fundamental human rights are taken care of primarily and without any delay. In principle it holds that health care, food, shelter, exercise, and education are things that all humans must be guaranteed by the state to enjoy equally, and in no differing quantities. Communism opposes the reality that these things are purchasable goods, expensive enough to leave the majority of society struggling to buy them. In fact, there are very few businesses in the United States that are bigger and more profitable than the ones that sell our basic human needs. So, the McCarthy era government was right to think that communism opposes "the American way of life". Whether you agree or disagree with communism is not at all the question. The question is: Do you agree that the government should investigate, punish, and jail people who it fears may hold certain political beliefs?

For those about to claim that such times are long gone, why are similar things always taking place in current events? The state still wages a war against the free speech rights of the people who want to popularize reasonable criticism of it. The simple fact that political prisoners exist stands as clear testimony to this. Mumia Abu-Jamal, being the most prominent political prisoner today, was even censored from the so-called "progressive" National Public Radio which gave in to the pressures and stakes of supporting someone charged with being on death row for murder. A few months ago, at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, a painting that depicted the Virgin Mary soiled or, some might say, "vandalized", had Mayor Giuliani threatening to revoke all city funding from the museum if they did not cease to exhibit the artwork. The mayor's threat was based on the upset of the Christian contingent in New York who were not only certain to find the painting offensive, but constitute a significant number of his supporters. To justify his anger the mayor had to take a completely visual piece of art, without any explicit text, and read it as if it were captioned: "Kill the Christians". This is particularly absurd given the fact that the visual arts lie completely outside the realm of speech and behavior, yet the painting was deemed something that should be regulated anyway.

**Most recently, in downtown Seattle,** tens of thousands of protesters organized in solidarity to prevent the World Trade Organization from holding another meeting behind closed doors. Out of these tens of thousands, approximately thirty anarchist protesters took it upon themselves to smash the windows of The Gap clothing store and steal coffee from Starbucks. These businesses, including the local McDonald's, out of an-

ticipation alone, closed down at the height of the protest. Of course, the anarchists injured no people, as their targets were one and all inanimate objects. While their actions were the protesters' most "violent," they are nowhere near as violent as the business practices of these companies that depend on child labor, environmental destruction, and exploitative slave wages. And, of course, the remaining 10,000 protesters were completely peaceful, many even denouncing the windows broken by their comrades. In response to the protesters, the state police and federal armed guards were called in with rubber bullets and tear gas used at point blank range. Both the state and the nation joined forces to control peaceful protesters with weapons and curfews.

What I mean by citing these events from the turn of the century to the present, is the following: I am not at all interested in defending the Constitution as a fair and just document. However, it is absolutely unacceptable for the state to exercise regulatory powers over what it decides is ideologically, politically, or philosophically extreme. From the few examples above, it is clear that the precedent we enforce when we push the state to show its altruism and oppose the Ku Klux Klan is far scarier than the KKK themselves. The state is an extremist group of the highest order, intent on doing anything it takes to maintain its authoritarian partnership with a nation that has had more blood on its hands this past year than any Klan of dolts has ever been responsible for. The KKK rally consisted of 12 - 24 unmasked, unarmed Klan members. And indeed, they were spewing their idiotic blather. There were hundreds upon hundreds of cops present, all armed, and, at 4 p.m., an additional barrage of police in full riot gear whizzed by Robyn and I on motorcycles. There were over 1,000 people in a counter-demonstration against the KKK. If the cops were not there, the Klan members may have been killed by one or a group of the angry mob. While I'm glad that nobody was killed at the rally, I am rather convinced that the 1,000 people in the counter-demonstration were more than enough of a "force" against the KKK. The hundreds of officers policing the rally were not there to protect the hordes of counter-demonstrators from the small group of unarmed Klansmen. On the contrary, were it not for the guaranteed police protection, I doubt that the KKK would have come through for the 'media-celebrated' rally in the first place.

Most other countries, much to the surprise of Americans, see this country as the ruthless leader of *globalization*, more accurately referred to as *imperialism*. Given our national history of slavery and international militarism, it is far from our government's logical place to conclude which forms of "extremism" are appropriate. This has not been a decision our government has been good at making. We need to object to the government's every judgment of ideological extremism, decide for ourselves, and then show up by the droves to counter the rallies. While this is easier said and done in New York City than in many small rural areas throughout the United States, "we the people" need to find new and creative ways to hold political sway. By no means do I wish to belittle the

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danger of the KKK. Indeed, I am inspired by the mass oppositional turnout at their tiny, brainless rally. This is precisely what we need to do. We need to overcome our invisibility and inaudibility and send a clear message to the state and to the KKK that we will not tolerate their various forms of selective oppression.

Now, perhaps your right-wing uncle retorts that this is all liberal, exaggerated rhetoric ... he says I'm immature and inaccurate. Well, Uncle Limbaugh, I must admit, I am not a seasoned scholar, nor am I an expert on U.S. history. I guess it's lucky for me then, that Howard Zinn is both. I recommend that old Uncle Cashflow read Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*, to see just how much I've exaggerated. Believe me, the KKK does not have a monopoly on hate. We cannot expect very much if we depend on the extremist groups of the highest order to help us oppose the smaller extremist groups who operate on the same basic principles. Let us never shut our mouths, never stop building alternatives, and never believe in one bright morning when the oppressors start opposing oppression. ¶



Writing is the ability to set down thoughts to paper, to communicate, to reveal one's self. It is a powerful tool, one capable of generating political and social power. It is a tool that is greatly underestimated and in some cases neglected in our schools. A grave injustice is being committed in our schools as many students from urban neighborhoods are being excluded from this craft.

Writing is not a luxury of the elite—writing cannot occupy the position of a status symbol. In a society where all are guaranteed certain “inalienable rights,” writing would serve, ideally, as means by which all peoples could practice political and social power. Not all have equal access. I believe that those who are in the greatest need of assistance are those students in our urban schools. It is with concern to these populations that I will introduce a non-traditional approach to writing—an approach that I believe will relieve some of the social pains caused by our inability to reach these students.

I believe it is time to take a non-traditional approach to writing. I see our current approaches to writing, and our writing system in general, to be a political hindrance for students in urban communities. In many urban schools we teach students who speak a non-standard dialect. These are students who speak a first language other than standard English in their homes—these may include Spanish, Black English Vernacular, Japanese or Korean.

We neglect such diversity in our schools as we teach a language system that has conventionally “favored the syntactic forms of dialect spoken by more powerful social groups ... most of the controversy surrounding correctness finally has to do with power, status, and class” (Horner 172). A correlation can thus be drawn with the ways our schools approach the subject of writing, as our traditional forms of writing teach to the linguistic elite. In this process we deny non-standard dialect speakers (NSD) the privilege of using their own dialects in writing. We are, in fact, asking these students to leave part of themselves and culture behind in order to write in a “traditional” framework.

It is when we consider such social conventions, and their relationship to writing—with regard to urban communities—that we can fully conceptualize the difficulties these students face as writers. Many non-standard dialect speakers have difficulties resolving discrepancies between their spoken language and the one they are struggling to write. Unfortunately, this often results in students’ experiencing a “general malaise” with regard to writing—an experience that oftentimes affects their self-image as learners.

Within the traditional framework of writing we ask these students to assimilate, and many non-standard dialect students tend to fail rather than flourish. It is with the implementation of a non-traditional approach to writing—grammar B—that can allow students’ direct experience of language be the carrier of culture, the facilitator of knowledge. Grammar B is the means of subverting the dominant paradigm with reference to writing. It is a means by which non-standard dialect students can become more comfortable with their own power of the pen, and a means to negotiate and bring about their own political and social power.

With the introduction of grammar B, students have the opportunity to develop a voice with writing that offers them the freedom to communicate all the things they have to say. One of the simplistic beauties of grammar B is the ease with which students can adapt to the various stylistic conventions that govern this writing. Their stylistic choices may

include, but are not limited to the crot, the labyrinthine sentence, double-voice, the list, repetitions/repetends/refrains, synchronicity and collage/montage. For the purpose of this brief introduction I will present only two of these styles—the crot and labyrinthine sentence.

A basic ingredient in grammar B is the crot, which in a nutshell means “bit” or “fragment”. It is a unit that stands alone and can be measured up against a stanza in poetry. The crot is well known for its rapid transitions and dramatic breaks in logic, a convention far removed from a traditional style of grammar. An example of a crot follows:

*My daughter, Zoe, the super hero*

*Months passed by, we patiently waited. Crying, screaming, beautiful blue toes and fingers. Super hero. Avenging all evils of the world. Reading-expanding-brilliant-mind. Stating her case with authoritative conviction, yes, this world is hers—hers to save and change. Knocking down castles and wrestling with boys. Snuggling in my lap, asleep beside me. Sweet breaths that have changed my life. Beauty-Strength-Purity. Zoe. Super hero.*

Crots can be used to help students get a better sense of their creative qualities and to gain confidence in their potentials as writers. The crot allows the student to write and articulate without the confines of traditional grammar. Students have the freedom to create pieces which make great leaps of logic and to punctuate in any manner they see fit. If a student wishes to place a comma after each word they can do so, in the name of style. Crots are a beautiful thing; they have the potential to build students’ confidence and desire to write—they demand that students’ voices be heard.

Another stylistic device from the world of grammar B is the labyrinthine sentence. A labyrinthine sentence is one which can go on forever. An example of the labyrinthine sentence follows:

*You always told me i'd be the one to make it the one to find the happiness the one to find the balance between this and that the one to mold my dreams into reality and here we sit separated by miles and fate and self-damned life the distant cousin to destiny and successes wed to failure my dreams have transcended destiny yours live in fate.*

The labyrinthine sentence can succeed in accomplishing many things for many students. In addition to freeing up a student’s creativity, labyrinthine sentences help students gain control of their writing style. Such exercises can prove to be invaluable tools for writers, as much of a writer’s success depends on their ability to process thoughts from pen to paper. With the labyrinthine sentence the students can write run-on sentences galore, all in the name of style. Students can create sentences which draw upon minuscule transitions, and they can create comma splices without fear of the red pen. An issue of importance is that students have the freedom to express themselves with writing and grammar, to build foundations of writing based on their understanding or misunderstanding of grammatical rules.

When we consider the difficulties and the insecurities many face with regard to writing, such an approach could free up NSD students fear of writing, as traditional rules will not bare their voices. Once students recognize the grammatical freedom they have within the realm of grammar B, they may begin to develop their own style as writers.

It would be unjust to teach students solely on the beneficial merits of non-traditional writing such as grammar B. One of the main goals of implementing grammar B is to allow students to experience the power they have as writers, and the impor-

tance of having a voice in our society. Though this form of writing is beneficial, students must have a certain amount of instruction in traditional grammar in order to achieve the fullest benefits and personal power that can be derived from writing.

I am not suggesting that grammar B serves solely as a segue to assimilation with traditional forms of writing. Rather, I am suggesting that grammar B serve as a means to empower students, to awaken them to the vital importance and reason for writing—to communicate. The grammatical rules that govern the ways in which this message is sent are secondary to the communicative process. In order to introduce writing as a powerful tool we must first break the cycle that many NSD students experience—the inability to understand the “code” of traditional writing, the “conflict” and “general malaise” that many NSD students experience when writing.

The goal behind the teaching of grammar B is to empower students through strengthening their writing skills, and to help students adapt to the complex world of traditional grammar and writing. Since many urban students face difficulties with the assimilation into this world of writing, grammar B seems a more productive alternative than letting students internalize the problems they face with other conventional methods.

There are very real and important reasons why such an alternative style of grammar should be implemented in our urban schools. The linguistic difficulty that many NSD students experience is one such reason; but behind linguistic difficulties many political inequalities demand an alternative teaching and learning style. We must stop paying lip-service to the notion that all students in our “great” nation receive a fair and equal education; for the very language and writing we teach and demand our NSD students master fails to honor such equality.

Educators can, however, bring about such equality for all students. We do this through first honoring their distinct linguistic differences; to make it known to all students that they can achieve and be proud of their own voices. Once students have become comfortable with their own voices in writing we can move on to an integration of such voices into traditional styles of writing. With this approach the NSD student is not forced to leave behind their voice and their culture; rather, the NSD student is encouraged to retain all elements of who they are while entering into the world of traditional grammar.

In this sphere of grammar B and traditional grammar, the non-standard dialect student has much more to gain than to lose. They can be empowered through their own writing skills. It is when NSD students have been encouraged to develop their own voices in writing, and segue these voices into traditional forms of writing, that these students stand a chance of gaining political equality in our country. I believe that if our schools are able to integrate such writing programs into their curriculums NSD students will graduate feeling as though they do have a voice. A voice in which they can compete and excel. ☐

## For More Information

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*When I was 15 years old, I saw Henry & June, the first film to be granted an NC-17 rating. I snuck into the Highland Park Theater for the rating, but I walked out dazzled by Paris and the writers who lived there—particularly Anaïs Nin, the film's subject, and her lover, Henry Miller. Over the next several years I made my way through Nin's voluminous diaries and the 1500+ pages of Miller's Rosy Crucifixion trilogy: Sexus, Plexus, and Nexus—which is actually about New York—but all the same—I knew I needed to get to Paris at some point. Call it a pilgrimage.*

# PARIS— A Brief Cultural and Travel Guide for the broke and romantic By Jenn Solheim



Eight years later, after fanagling several scholarships, I finally made it to Paris through a study abroad program, sponsored by the French departments at my university and its sister school. On my third day there, I headed to Montparnasse and found Nin's apartment (which was also, ironically, the birthplace of Simone de Beauvoir) and swooned. "I'm here, Linotte!" I wanted to scream. Instead I walked down to Le Select (one of those famous literary cafés, which I'll get to in bit) and ordered an Anis (what would soon become my drink of choice).

But of course, there's much more to it than that. I had read a lot about Parisian culture before I arrived, and I knew that this was no simple Eden. Racism, especially towards northern African peoples (Algerians and Moroccans, in particular) runs rampant. Although the city proper is relatively safe, one quickly learns that in France, the marginalized folks live in the suburbs—the inverse of the United States, because it is the suburbs that are poorly funded (France is a socialist country), and people are pushed out of the city because of the exorbitant cost of living. The reported incidences of rape and murder are lower in Paris than in the United States (handguns are illegal), but context is everything here: this is a culture that believes date rape to be a phenomenon arisen from political correctness. It simply doesn't exist in the eyes of many French people. The French language reflects its culture so well in its gender-ladenness: sexism is a rampant thing, a thing joked about, and taken lightly by most men and many women in France. And of course, the city is expensive. Very expensive.

But all this is not to say that I didn't love living there. There were many virtues to Parisian culture, things that I still miss every day. I love the thrift of the people: buying only enough groceries to last a day or two, food is never around long enough to spoil. Though most Parisians do dress impeccably, one thing we never realize about this stereotype is that they probably own only two or three outfits. Parisians are about quality instead of quantity. The baguette is a government subsidized staple food: 4f20 (about 75 cents) no matter which boulangerie you wander into.

There's more, so much more, to say about this world; on my flight over, I had read that for Americans, French culture can be more difficult to adapt to than Chinese culture. Though I can't attest to Chinese culture, I can say that I was always surprised by the enigmatic Parisian way of existence. Here I present you with a budget guide to Paris—the wonderful things that you might miss if the need for franc-pinching weren't there—as well as some tips (for women, in particular) on dress, safety, and etiquette.

## General Information

Paris is divided into twenty neighborhoods, or *arrondissements*, which are numbered 1-20 in a snail-shaped order (check out a map and trace the numbers in order, and this will make more sense). In this piece, when I talk about the 5th, for example, I mean the 5th *arrondissement*. When in Paris, you will see the 5th labeled 5ème, 18th as 18ème, et cetera.

Public transportation is relatively cheap, and fast. If you will be there for at least a week, buy an *hebdomadaire* (weekly pass with unlimited usage); if not, buy them in units of eight to save a few francs. These passes are good for both the *métro* and buses, but I'd try to take the buses whenever possible, since this allows you to see the city. I often hopped on a bus and took it to the end of the line just to see what I'd find. But ideally, just walk. It's such a detailed city that you miss a lot by bus.

Directions: get a map and we'll all be happy, and a compass won't hurt either. There are so many tiny, winding streets in Paris that even the Parisians don't know street names and locations most of the time. If your stay will be long, definitely invest in *Plan de Paris*, available at most *Tabacs* and magazine kiosks. It's ultra-detailed and super easy to use. But getting lost is a joy in Paris, and keep in mind that if it starts raining, you're always within 500 meters of a *métro*

stop—the city planners designed it that way.

Women: try not to make eye contact with men, unless you want to be followed, sometimes for hours at a time (this happened to me a few times and while it's not exactly scary during the day and in public places, it's incredibly annoying). French men view eye contact as an invitation; even if they initiate contact by touching your arm or calling out a cloying "coo-coo." If you so much as flinch, you've got yourself a shadow. This might sound paranoid now, but just wait until you get there. It's one example of how profoundly different French culture is. Oh, expect old-school whistles, too.

## Cheap Parisian Fashion Tips

With none of my usual feminist leanings intact, I present you with the easiest, cheapest, three-step plan to fitting in in Paris—it can help you negotiate this world much more efficiently.

1. *L'écharpe*: wool, silk, chiffon, synthetic, it makes no difference, wear a scarf and you are instantly transformed. Pick one up at any of the tourist shops in the 5th for 10 francs a pop, or go to Agnès B. or *Gallerie Lafayette* for the genuine article. I got a few there for 70f or so, one smart-looking, embroidered and maroon and another frowsy and covered with flowers. I noticed an automatic difference in how I was addressed at the *boulangerie*, by waiters and on the street. This goes for guys, too: most men wear sturdy wool scarves in grey or black. A black sweater wrapped about your shoulders will do just as well: you'll see this all the time on the buses and *métro*, on both men and women.

2. *Noir*: Black is always *du jour*. French women are impossibly petite as a general rule, and you will glower as you watch them flitting down the street, slender, slender legs in black hose wearing the U.S. equivalent of a size negative 2 skirt, chomping on *pain au chocolat*, leaving not one buttery flake on their midnight black or dusky grey shawl. There's virtually no way to compete with their innate elegance but if you wear black you will feel sleek and lovely and maybe at times even fantasize that you are as elegant as they (as you eat your third *crêpe* of the day.) Black pants are a must, and if you can muster it the skirt and black hose will do quite well in getting admitted at the *Bains Douches*.

3. *Rouge à Levres*: You can't go through a city like Paris, so replete with amazing paintings, without working on your own masterpiece. Lipstick, dark and luscious looking, will help you to this end. I didn't wear it until one of the last evenings I was there; I went out to dinner with three girlfriends, wore a black dress and borrowed a shade of lipstick from my glam pal Melissa called "Tapestry Red." *Vive la différence!*—the *maître'd* took me by the arm as we walked to our perfectly situated window seat. This had never happened at this joint before, when I had walked in wearing cargo pants and with a monotone face. A warning: anticipate walking the boy gauntlet. As I was ushered across the restaurant, a banquet table of about twenty soccer players hooted and shouted lascivious things as I sauntered past. All you can do is look haughty and ignore them.

American tipoffs: tennis shoes. T-shirts with corporate slogans on them. Jeans. A distinct lack of scarfage. Although all this attention to detail may seem excessive, keep in mind that Americans are frequently on the outs with the collective French consciousness: half-way through my stay there, the Kosovo situation broke out, and the U.S. embassy actually advised people to pretend they were Canadian for a few days. And indeed, some Americans were badly beaten in the ensuing riots and protests. Nothing this extreme may be going on while you're there, but dress is a sort of duty in France: respect their culture and you will find folks much friendlier and more helpful.

## Places to Stay

My one-room studio was the embodiment of the starving artist's turret, although the building was Haussmann-style and thus I had no



rounded wall. But I had French windows that opened wide onto a sturdy black grate, six stories above Rue Ganneron. The building overlooked the Cimetière Montmartre, and beyond that was the organic Parisian landscape, buildings of all shapes, colors, sizes, Sacré-Coeur standing stately on the horizon. This offset the fact that I had approximately one hundred square feet, the shower, sink, refrigerator and bed all contained within. The toilet was ten feet down the hall, what western Europeans refer to as the “Turkish toilet”—a term used to other this hole-in-the-ground, since western Europeans are the ones that invented the damn thing.

A chambre de bonne (maid’s room) is ideal for long-term, cheap housing. They aren’t the easiest to find, but the American Church in Paris is a great resource for available spaces. Though they are tiny, they often are located on the top floor of buildings, and they have amazing views.

For shorter term stays, I have one place I can recommend: Foyer International des Étudiantes, 93, blvd. St. Michel, 01.42.54.49.63, Métro (M): Luxembourg. My grammar class met for two hours a day in this early-twentieth century building that was first designed as a school and boarding house for young women. Smack dab across the street from the Jardin du Luxembourg, down the street from the Panthéon, the Sorbonne, and only a mile or so straight shot from the Seine and Shakespeare & Co., you can’t beat the location if you’re in Paris for a quick stay. As per the 1999 *Let’s Go* guide, it’s 97f (\$16-\$20) per night for a two bed dorm room. They also have monthly rates. From October through June it’s women only—my apologies,

fellas. However, the *Let’s Go* guide is indispensable for cheap, usually clean places to stay—if you’re traveling through Europe or even just going to a few cities, it’s a great investment. You can’t go wrong with almost any place they list.

For a short stay, I’d definitely recommend staying in the 5th or 6th arrondissements: they are centrally located, close to lots of the major museums but not as pricey as the 2nd, 3rd or 11es. If you’re staying longer, venture out into the less explored areas: I lived in the 18th. Few people spoke English (great if you like that submersion thing, which I just adore), and it was far more relaxed and homey.

## *Free Things to Do in Paris*

Even if you can’t afford the 35f coffee, and you have to choose between the Louvre and the Musée D’orsay because of your budget and can’t even dream of sitting down to a five-course meal, there is plenty to keep you occupied. I’ll get to the eating later; first let’s take a walk.

1. Louvre to the Arc du Triomphe. So: you went to see the Mona Lisa, the Winged Victory and Venus de Milo, and your head’s a-spinnin’ from the myriad of languages and dialects around you, not to mention the fact that Mona’s really quite small and you only saw the top half because of the voluminous crowds. Don’t despair! You’re on your way to one of the most famous walks in Paris. From the Louvre (let’s just say the I.M. Pei pyramid), start walking west. You will know you’re going west because as you walk across the Place du Carrousel,



*Clockwise from top left: the Eiffel Tower; half of the Opéra Garnier; the view from my apartment window looking up on the Cimetière Montmartre; one of the statues that line the Opéra Garnier.*



you will see an amazing sight before you: the miniature arch frames a perfect view of the Jardin de Tuileries, the Obelisk, and far in the distance the looming Arc du Triomphe. You will have your entire route sprawling out in front of you. As you walk, notice how the Louvre just keeps going, and going...you will then walk through the Tuileries, a beautiful old statue garden. The Obelisk stands in a busy area; just follow the foot traffic to keep yourself from getting run over by maniacal Parisian drivers (okay, not truly maniacal: they just have a decidedly different rhythm than we do when it comes to driving.) Then you will come upon the Champs-Élysées, yes indeedly. I was thoroughly disappointed to see the Americanization of this lovely boulevard, from the Gap that threatened to arrive in July to the Disney store. If you're with a friend, Marxist diatribes are always appropriate while walking through Paris. However, you can pay them no mind; the Arc beckons. The ideal time to view it, I found, is right at dusk: the sky turns a luminous blue, and the arc positively glows. A word of advice from this young naïve: take the underground pedestrian crossing instead of trying to race across the six-lane traffic. In a moment of James Bond-like delirium one evening, I almost got hit.

2. Quartier Latin to l'Opéra Garnier. I walked home from my grammar class almost every day; it was a great way to come to know the city, as there are so many tiny winding streets that I was able to vary it almost every day. I present you here my daily walk, which I took in the sleet, rain, and sun. It's convenient because it starts at the Foyer I mentioned above and it follows the route of Bus 27, so if you get tired just find a bus stop and hop on.

Start at the Foyer International (see address above.) Walk north towards the Seine on Boulevard St-Michel. Notice on the east side of the boulevard the Panthéon, the Sorbonne, and the Musée de Cluny; finally, when you arrive at the river, look east again and you will see Notre Dame. Take the quai west to the Rue de Pont Neuf. Turn north on this bridge and walk to the end, stopping at the far north edge to revel in the view of the river and the Eiffel Tower (you've definitely seen postcard shots taken from this vantage point; it's even more lovely in person). Now, walk farther west on the north side of the river to the Louvre. You will be able to walk through the Louvre, past the pyramid. Exit on the north end of the Louvre and you will be facing the Palais Royal. Head north on Avenue de l'Opéra; you will see the famous Opéra Garnier before you, my favorite building in Paris (also where the real Phantom of the Opera hung out).

3. Other Recommended Neighborhoods and Streets: Montparnasse, St-Germain-des-Près, Montmartre (climb the hilly streets), Rue Mouffetard, Rue St. Jacques (in the Quartier Latin just east of Boulevard St-Michel; this was the first road to go from Paris to Rome, starting about 2000 years ago). Get a bottle of wine and hang out around the Eiffel Tower at sunset. Walk along the Seine.

Other free things:

- Jardin du Luxembourg – play your guitar, picnic, nap. Revel in the statues and vacation house of the Di Medici's.
- Cemeteries: Cimetière Montparnasse, Montmartre, Père

LaChaise. I could write volumes about the cemeteries in Paris; museums in and of themselves, I walked many a rainy afternoon through the three major ones listed above, plus several of the smaller ones. My apartment overlooked Cimetière Montmartre, so when I think of my life there, often the image that pops into my head is the semicircular sweep of the mausoleums, headstones, and monuments. Parisians so value these sanctuaries that in the aftermath of the storm that tore the roof off Notre Dame and destroyed thousands of trees in late 1999, the Parliament decided that the cemeteries would be their first priority.

All cemeteries in Paris are free and open daily; ask for your free map at the entranceway, which will show you where the famous folks and notable graves are.

- Churches: with the exception of Notre Dame, churches in Paris are also free and open daily. These too are frequently museum-like, what with the stained glass, pipe organs, and primarily gothic architecture. Sacré-Cœur in the 18th is a great one; after wandering through the church, hang out on the steps. Others: St-Germain-des-Près (6th), St Etienne du Mont (5th, directly behind the Panthéon), Sainte Trinité (9th).

- Shakespeare & Co: 37, rue de la Bucherie, M: St-Michel. This is the legendary bookstore where many a young American writer has sought refuge when first arriving in Paris (name your Beat and he's slept here). Founder George Whitman, allegedly the great-grandson of Walt, still makes a daily appearance; we began exchanging small talk by the end of my time in Paris. You can stay in this bookstore and read for hours; their upstairs library is huge and there are tons of futons and mattresses to curl upon while reading.

## Cuisine

I won't lie to you: most restaurants are way out of the student's or budget traveler's price range, and many of the conveniently located ones are tourist snares that serve microwaved quiches. I'd consult *Let's Go* for yearly updates on good, cheap(ish) restaurants, but I have a couple places to recommend plus some tips for picnicking and eating cheap.

1. Chez Papa, at rue Froidevaux and rue Deparcieux, 14th, M: Denfert-Rochereau. Across from the Cimetière Montparnasse. You'll sit elbow to elbow with strangers and have smoke blown in your face throughout your meal, but the raucous and thoroughly French atmosphere of this hidden culinary paradise kept my friends and me coming back almost biweekly. Epicureans are duty-bound to order the Boyard Complet, a big earthenware bowl with mescalun salad, tomatoes, three kinds of cheese, two fried eggs, jambon (sans jambon for the vegetarians like me), and an amazing vinaigrette liberally doused all over. Add in the complimentary bread and voilà...a huge meal for 40f, a record in Paris, to my knowledge. Even if you haven't eaten all day, you won't be able to finish this meal. Order the Merlot and you will be happy.

2. Douce France, on rue Royer Collard (a tiny street between rue

*From left.* The Gravestone of Sartre and de Beauvoir in Cimetière Montparnasse; Playbill from the ballet I saw at the Opéra Garnier; a statue in the Louvre called "Psyché ranimée par le baiser de l'amour" by Canova; the logo for the literary café Les Deux Magots.



## LES DEUX MAGOTS





Gay Lussac and rue St. Jacques), 5th. A sandwich stand run by an adorable husband and wife team, sandwiches here are 13f. This is the only stand on the street so you can't miss it. Enjoy in the Jardin du Luxembourg just a few blocks away.

Cheapest eats: get a baguette from any boulangerie, then go to a grocery store (the ubiquitous Monoprix is the easiest to spot with its red neon sign) and stock up on cheese (chèvre, French goat cheese, is my favorite, with camembert a close second), sausage (saucisson) if you eat meat, and dijon mustard (moutarde). Don't forget wine—buy almost any bottle; even the cheapest Bordeaux will surpass anything you've had in the States. This is true for the cheese and sausage, too: the stuff we pay upwards of \$11 a pound for in the U.S. goes for about 4f (80 cents) in France. Make sandwiches or eat in slices. This huge heavenly meal for what will cost you about 15f (\$3).

### *When you're ready to spend some cash...*

If you do have the cash to blow, the choices of museums, nightclubs, and cafés are dizzying. Hit both the Louvre and the Musée D'Orsay if you have time, as they're indispensable; here's some of my other favorites:

- Musée de Cluny, 01.43.25.62.00, M: Cluny-Sorbonne. Half 13th century abbey and half 2nd century Roman baths (the latter, undiscovered until World War 2, are still under excavation), this museum is worth seeing for the building alone. This is the medieval museum, so there are tons of amazing tapestries, statues, armour, old books and illuminations.
- Musée Rodin, 77, rue de Varenne, 7th, 01.44.18.61.10, M: Varenne. Just paying to get into the park (5f), you'll see Le Penseur (the Thinker) and Le Porte d'Enfer (the Door to Hell), but if you shell out the extra cash (28f) you'll get to see Camille Claudel's amazing sculptures as well as Rodin's The Kiss and The Cathedral.
- Café Charbon, 109, rue Oberkampf, 11th, 01.43.57.55.13, M: Ménilmontant. A gorgeous fin-de-siècle café/club built in an old coal factory, this is the only place I know of in Paris to see bands for free (Sunday nights usually beginning around 9 pm). Plus, cheap Anis and coffee, unpretentious, relaxed atmosphere, and few tourists. Eat dinner here if you can swing it, and order the amazing crème brûlée for desert.
- Mosquée de Paris, rue Geoffrey St. Hilaire, 5th, 01.43.31.38.20, M: Censier Daubenton. Want to get a hint of what northern Africa is like? Come here, ease yourself onto one of the low benches, and order a thé à la menthe (mint tea) for 15f. The single sex hammam (check the schedule for men's days and women's days) is a great way to spend an afternoon—just be prepared for a decidedly unamerican dose of nakedness from people of all shapes, sizes and ages, and the expectation that you will follow suit.
- Cafés in St-Germain-des-Près and Montparnasse, M: St-Germain-des-Près or M: Montparnasse-Bienvenue. If you're anything like me, these cafés will be a mecca. In St-Germain, go to Les Deux Magots and sit in the seats where Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Ernest Hemingway wrote, slept, and argued during the second war war—their seats are marked with small gold plaques. Just west is Café de Flore, another major literary and artist hangout (Sartre, de Beauvoir, Picasso, Breton, and Thurber, just to name a few). The latter serves expensive but divine chocolat (hot chocolate)—chocoholics like myself will be in such an orgasmic daze that they won't even notice the outrageous 40f bill. Of note for philosophy buffs: l'église de St-Germain-des-Près, which hovers imposingly to the east this little corner, houses the remains of Descartes.

Although the atmosphere in Montparnasse is far more stuffy, I had to visit La Coupole, where Anaïs Nin used to hold court, and Le Séléc, where Henry Miller spent hours hitting up friends and strangers for change. These cafés are listed in all the guidebooks; in any case, you can't miss them if you just meander around the neighborhood.

A final word of advice: there's nothing like spending the entire night out in Paris and watching the sunrise. Watch it come up over Notre Dame or the Eiffel Tower, and remember to breathe. You won't stop dreaming about it for months. ☿

1. Nin's childhood nickname.

2. the nineteenth-century city planner, whose apartment building design made Paris what it is today. Unfortunately, it was also what drove up housing prices, forcing lower-income people out to the fringes of town. Ironically, Haussman's mausoleum in Père Lachaise is rusty and unkempt, perhaps just deserts for this upper-class panderer.

#### Resources:

Let's Go Paris, St. Martin's Press, \$15.99. Get the most current edition; they come out yearly.

Literary Cafés of Paris, by Noël Riley Fitch, Starrhill Press, 1989. \$8.95. The cafés' histories never change, so even though this book is a decade old it's still pertinent. Lots of cool anecdotes about writers and artists.

Permanent Parisians: An Illustrated, Biographical Guide to the Cemeteries of Paris, by Judi Culbertson and Tom Randall, Walker and Co., 1986. \$16.99. This is sorely in need of an update but still provides tons of great info and guides to the cemeteries, especially for the sprawling Père Lachaise.

## Gaybashed in Portland by George Sweetman

Homophobic violence is something that still exists, nay, it's something that is still rampant and accepted in our society. There's no right or wrong way to respond to being gaybashed, for some people running is the best solution, for others it's calling the cops, others try and talk their way out of situations even if they have to lie about who they really are. Myself? I stand my ground and I bash back! I'm telling this story because it's a common one, but one that bears repeating. I'm not looking for sympathy or praise, I'm just telling it like it is.

I had rolled into Portland the previous day and was looking for something to do and hopefully a place to stay, not that sleeping under the Burnside Bridge wasn't fun.

I came across a flyer for a show by the band God Hates Computers, vaguely recalling reading a positive review of them in a punk rock fanzine I decided to head down to the bar and check 'em out. When I got to the club it turned out that God Hates Computers wasn't playing but a couple of other bands were. Thinking "What the hell, it's not like I have any pressing engagements" I decided to stick around for the cheap beer, rock and roll and hopefully a friendly punk that would let me crash on their floor.

Well, turned out that Kelly, from the band Detestation, was drinking there that night with a couple of friends. I meet Kelly the summer before when his band played in Calgary and although I didn't think he'd remember me I went up and re-introduced myself. After a pretty eventful show (which is another story) we decided to head back to Kelly's place, a short 50 block walk. After about 10 minutes we decided we needed to fuel up and Kelly suggested a nearby pub.

Kelly had just gotten back from eight months in Europe and when he left the bar was a really cool neighborhood pub that had tons of stuff on tap. While he was traipsing all over Europe the management had changed at the pub. Kelly's cool neighborhood pub

Every time my ex-girlfriend used to come visit me in New York City, she would bug me to take her to Coney Island. I always emphatically said no, I absolutely would not go there with her.

Why? Well, because of my mother. You see, from a young age on, whenever I made that very same request I was emphatically told no, we absolutely could not go there. And it wasn't because mom thought I was a rotten kid who didn't deserve the pleasures of the endless amusement park rides and the sun and the sand and the beach that Coney offered. Nope, that wasn't it at all. After all, mom did take me to get sunburned on beaches, just not on the beaches of Coney Island. And, much to my happiness, I did get to go on amusement park rides until I threw up the day's worth of cotton candy and warm soda, but again, never at Coney Island. So, what was it about Coney Island that my mother would let me have no part of? Well, apparently, my mother decided a long time ago that Coney Island was a "bad" place, a dangerous, ugly, dirty place even — and thus a place we should not go. Granted, by the time my girlfriend wanted me to go I was in my early twenties and capable of making my own decisions, but jeez, this was my mom, if she said it was bad, than hell, it must be bad.

My mother told stories of the Coney Island she knew as a child, a place that sounded like a wonder land of everything a kid could ask for. Apparently, according to mom, it was once the mecca of summertime fun in New York. As she tells it however, through the years it has been neglected and transformed into a vile pit of despair that should not be visited, especially not with an out of town girlfriend from the pristine land of Upstate, NY. And besides, how would she explain it to my girlfriend's parents if she were killed while we were there? Wouldn't that be embarrassing?

So, I never went. My mom's fears became my own, and I avoided Coney Island, Brooklyn like the plague. Eventually, however, my girlfriend won out. Blame it on her



## Coney Island, The Cyclone, and Mom.

(story by eric weiss)

persistence, or on my latent adolescent yearnings to disobey my mom, but eventually I gave in, and one summer afternoon we headed off to the forbidden landscape of Coney Island.

Once there, I saw why my mom had lost her love of the place. Looking through my mom's eyes I saw a lot of decrepit old buildings, rickety looking rides, a dirty beach, the projects across the street, and some seedy looking characters lurking about. I quickly realized that my mom was right. Coney Island was dirty, and decrepit, and most probably crime ridden. But, through my eyes, I was able to see the greatness that still existed. I saw a beautiful mixture of the innocent, glory days of its past mixed with the raw, urban edge of its present. I saw a grand old carousel next to a junk shop. I saw the perennial amusement park favorite, bumper cars, updated for a modern, inner city audience — with loud hip hop blaring, and signs encouraging you to "Bump Your Ass Off!" I saw the shifty looking earners barking at me to come play their rigged games to win a prize for "my girl." I saw "A real live two-headed baby," and reveled in the site of the (probably faked) pickled malformation that my dollar entitled me to gawk at.

I realized that in despite of, and because of these things, I loved the place. So what if you have to pay a quarter just to use the dirtiest, smelliest bathroom you'll ever encounter? Like many things I love (i.e. punk rock, foul language in movies, spitting, etc...) Coney Island in the late nineties was just not something my mom could understand.

But I did. And through the years, I've kept coming back each summer. What keeps me coming however is not the dirty beach, or the opportunity to bump my ass off (though that is an incentive), but rather my desire to ride the greatest roller coaster of all time — Coney Island's famed Cyclone. What the Eiffel Tower is to Paris, or the pyramids are to Egypt, The Cyclone is to Coney Island. The only difference is the Cyclone ain't no boring-ass tourist attraction

### gaybashed in portland, continued.

had become the enemy headquarters of all punk rockers: a jock filled sports bar.

We walked in and were greeted with icy stares but figured we'd sit down and get some beer anyway, after all, it was beer.

We sat at a booth and the waitress came over to us and said she wouldn't serve us but after a bit of begging / complaining she reluctantly said "Okay, here's a pitcher but when you're finished you have to leave." Whatever.

After Kelly finished his pint he got up and walked to the bathroom passing by a table of jocks who gave him dirty looks. On his way back the meathead table gave him the standard "Nice hair you punk faggot" to which Kelly returned the traditional "Fuck you idiot" reply.

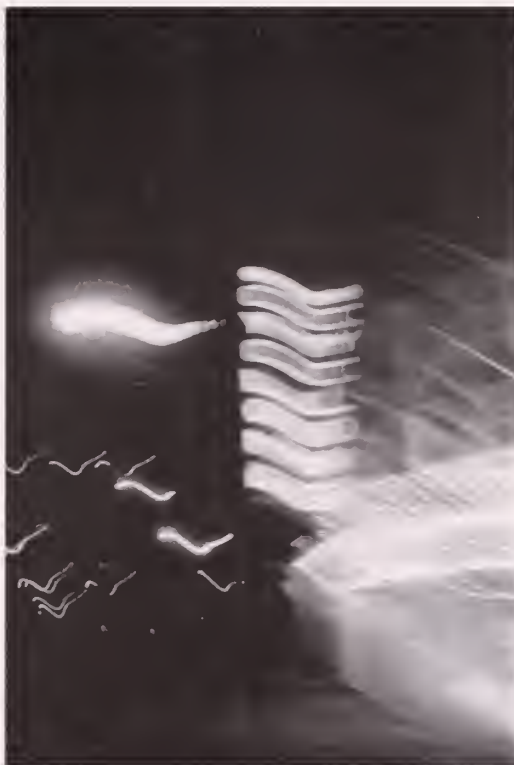
We finished our beer and left only to find the three jocks waiting outside for us. One of them, we'll call him shirtless white boy (because that's what he was), started yelling, "You guys are fucking fags aren't

you? You fucking faggots, I hate you faggots." and things of that nature, an impressive vocabulary for him no doubt. I had had about enough bullshit for one night so I turned to him and said "Yeah, I'm a fag, what ya going to do about it tough guy?" This really set shirtless white boy off and he turned to his two black friends and "These guys are faggots!" To which his fellow meatheads echoed "You're faggots? Fuck you, you fucking faggots!"

Realizing that the discussion wasn't going to enter multiple-syllable words Kelly and I started to walk away. The meatheads followed from a distance of about 20 yards for about a block when I looked down and saw two lovely pieces of broken curb that I immediately scooped up passing one to Kelly. This prompted the meatheads to yell, "You better put that down faggot, we're going to kick the shit out of you."

Yeah, we'll get right on that. Say, why don't we just hand you the concrete so you can bash our heads in with it?





factor, or if it really is in a state of disrepair, but either way, the raw look of the Cyclone really adds to the experience. Once you work up the nerve to pay for your four dollar ticket and enter the actual boarding area, the next thing you'll notice are the seats of the cars. There's no fancy pull over your head restraint that keeps you from moving around, or even a snug fitting shoulder harness. Nope, not on the Cyclone. The Cyclone features a padded bar in front of you. That's it. The bar stops you from falling out, but that's about all. Prepare to be thrown around...a lot.

Once your car is manually released (that's right, it's still done manually) you'll climb the initial 85 foot hill. At the apex, you'll be afforded a great view of

that you'll later wonder why you ever schlepped half way across the world to see. Far from it.

From afar, the Cyclone isn't the most visually imposing roller coaster you'll ever see. It sure as hell isn't the fastest or the tallest. Hell, it doesn't even have any loops. But, get up close and it'll strike as much fear in your heart as it surely did when people first laid eyes upon it at its opening in June of 1927. The first thing you'll notice is what it's made of. When you look at today's modern coasters they're almost all completely made of smooth steel, finely painted and slick. Not the Cyclone. Constructed out of steel and a whole lot of wood (much of which looks like it has been there since 1927), the Cyclone looks a lot like a child's Lincoln Log creation...and just about as sturdy. Before you even pay for your ticket you'll be nervously wondering, "Is that thing really safe? Why does all the wood look so old? Shouldn't they at least paint that thing again? Am I going to die?" Now, I don't know if the folks running the Cyclone keep it looking this way to increase the fear

the ocean and Coney Island...for about a second. Before you get a chance to take it all in you'll be rushing down the hill and careening around the track at speeds of up to 60 miles an hour, all the while being thrown around like helpless popcorn kernels in a hot air popper. Saying it is a rough ride, while technically accurate, is still quite an understatement. Remember the feeling of the bully in high school throwing you against a locker? That's about analogous to the feel of the Cyclone. Needless to say, bruising is not uncommon.

So, just how scary is the Cyclone? Well, Charles Lindburgh said it was "scariest than flying the Atlantic solo." And legend has it, in 1948 a man who had an ailment which made it impossible for him to make any verbalizations suddenly found himself able to scream while riding, and even able to say "I feel sick" once he got off. My ex-girlfriend, who finally got her wish to go to Coney Island, rode it just once and vowed never to do so again. As for myself, I still get nervous every time I ride it. Some scary shit, indeed.

Before you know it however, your ride is over. After a truly frightening and exhilarating one minute and fifty seconds, your train pulls back in and comes to a stop. At which time you thank your lucky stars you're still alive and quickly pull out the three bucks it'll take to allow you to stay in your seat and ride again. When you're finally done riding for the day you not only feel spent, tired, and bruised, but if you're like me, you'll also also feel more alive. You stared death in the face and won. You faced your fear and came out on top. It may sound far-fetched, but the

After another block the three meatheads finally got up the bottle to do what they had obviously intended to do in the first place. That is, jump us from behind.

Kelly and I both swung around with our concrete and connected with a meathead. Unfortunately I had my pack on and done up so I was thrown to the ground and shirtless white boy and one of the black meatheads started to kick me. I put up my arms to protect my head but after a few ineffective kicks I realized that I better get out of my pack, get on my feet and fight back. I did so and after a short scuffle me and Kelly drove them off.

"Welcome to Portland," deadpanned Kelly as we brushed ourselves off from the fight. After waiting a few seconds to see if they were going to come back we continued on our way.

We had walked about five more blocks when Kelly spotted the meatheads hiding in the shadows behind some dumpsters. Taking

off his bullet belt he swung it over his head and shouted, "You want to finish it mother-fuckers? Bring it on!" However, they just remained cowering behind the dumpsters. True to meathead form they waited until we were walking away before once again trying to jump us from behind.

This time there was only two of them, shirtless white boy and one of the black meatheads whom I'll call "Pack grabber". Shirtless white boy approached Kelly and got the bullet belt upside the head for his efforts.

Meanwhile, Pack-grabber had once again grabbed my pack only this time I shucked it off and he ended up on his ass. Recovering, pack-grabber yelled "Ha, ha. I got your pack!" and started to run across the street with it. Obviously this wouldn't do and I chased him to the other side of the street and punched him in the head. "Pack-grabber" dropped my pack and turned to face me but I was already tackling him. In a second we were on the ground, a place I was pretty comfortable fighting

Cyclone may just jolt you into appreciating life a little bit more.

Alright, so maybe I am getting a little bit melodramatic, but it is pretty scary. Not to mention, a hell of a lot of fun. So, the next time you're in New York City, skip all that other dumb tourist shit and head to Coney Island and the Cyclone. But do me a favor when you're there, ok? If you see me hanging out, please don't tell my mom. I think she might get mad.

*For information on Cyclone operating times, history and other stuff, check out: [www.astroland.com](http://www.astroland.com).* §



Bricks Avalon is a Cyclone enthusiast from where else, but Brooklyn, New York. While he has not (yet) set any records for most consecutive rides or anything of that nature, Bricks does have more of a passion for riding the great coaster than anyone else I've ever met. In fact, he even plans on immortalizing the Cyclone on his body permanently, in the form of a detailed tattoo.

*For someone who's never ridden the Cyclone, explain the Cyclone experience.*

The Cyclone is nuts! From the first drop – the first drop is sick – to the speed of it all – to the feeling that you are no longer on the tracks – to the rickety turns – to the whiplash and bruises – to the low rafters – to the botched paint job – to the squeal of metal – to the chipped wood – to the minimal seat restraint – to the teary eyes – to the queasy stomach – to the perma-smile – to the rush. The Cyclone is nuts!

*What is it about the Cyclone that keeps you coming back? What is its mystique?*

I keep coming back because I am simply obsessed. What keeps it fresh is the newcomers. The houseguests. The out of towners. The family members. Those who swear never to ride a roller coaster. Bring(ing) them to the Cyclone and getting them on that ride is a challenge. I can't get enough of it. The night ride definitely has a mystique about it...the dark of Coney Island...the crazy lights of the amusement rides...the boardwalk...the beach...it feels so surreal to walk around after just getting off of the Cyclone. (You're) all pumping with adrenaline.

*How many times have you ridden the*

*coaster? When do you ride the coaster? How often?*

I have definitely ridden the coaster too many times to even begin to count. I started riding it with my uncle when I was about eight or nine. Then I moved out of Brooklyn. So, there was a dry spell for some years. Then I got a job in Brooklyn and I started riding the Cyclone during lunch once or twice a week during the season. And I have been working there for about seven years now. Then I joined a softball team which is named The Cyclones and I have been playing with them for four years. And sometimes I would ride the Cyclone before games. Just to get me in the mood. And, in season I usually ride it at least two or three times a week. The most consecutive times I have ever ridden would be eight. My little sister was in from Florida. So we went to Coney Island with my cousin. And we rode it three times each. And then we realized that they run this new special where you can pay \$12.99 and hit the amusement park rides unlimited and the Cyclone five times, so we bought that and rode the coaster five more times. If it wasn't for the price, \$4.00, then I would ride it all day. But, if I had to take a guesstimate I would say I am into the 200's, approaching 300 (rides).

*Plan on going for any records? (i.e. most rides, most consecutive rides, etc...)*

I don't think that I can go for any records. Because I don't think that would be economical. But, if they



gaybashed in portland, continued.

having wrestled throughout high school. It was only a couple of seconds before I had managed to get hold of pack-grabbers family jewels and was hauling him around with him half-yelling, half-crying "auuggghhh!!... You better... Auuggghh!... let go of my nuts... auuughh!... faggot... oowww!" Needless to say I got right on that.

Kelly had managed to keep himself amused by watching the antics of shirtless white boy who, after getting hit with Kelly's bullet belt, yelled, "I'm going to get my gun!" and ran to the middle of the street before turning around and sticking his hand in his pocket and pretending that he had a gun in his shorts. Kelly, obviously unimpressed, replied by saying, "Oh, all of a sudden, you have a gun? Well then fucking shoot me already!"

It was at this time that a police car came to the scene with its lights flashing. On the sight of the cops the two would be gaybashers limped away as fast as they could. Now its been my experience that a couple

of scruffy punk rock looking types who had just been in a fight weren't going to be treated well or even believed by the cops so I was expecting the worst. Then out of nowhere three cars pulled up and the drivers explained how they saw the fight and in the words of one driver "These guys (us) totally got jumped. I saw the others waiting for them." another chimed in "Yeah, I saw them (the meatheads) waiting around but didn't know what they were up to until they attacked them (us)."

We told the cop the short version of what happened leaving out that it was a gaybashing, after all who's to know if the cop was a homophobic prick too? He asked us what they looked like and we told him Kelly adding, "They're long gone anyway". The cops offered to drive us home but when he heard where Kelly lived he replied "Sorry, that's out of my precinct." Whatever. Kelly was game for walking the remaining 40 odd blocks but I'd had enough excitement for the night so we got the cop to call us a cab.



gave me a season pass...I would ride that thing for weeks...with the Guinness Book of World Records on call. If they would let me, I would ride the whole thing upside down with my feet sticking out. Picture that as a bystander. You just see these feet dangling out of the front of the first car.

*Do you have a favorite seat position on the Cyclone? (i.e. front car, back car, etc...)*

As for favorite seats, there are different vibes from each seat. It all depends. If you're looking to get banged up a bit, whiplash, and experience the feeling of nearly being catapulted from your car, then the back car is for you. If you are into visuals the front car is beyond compare. If you are feeling mellow than anywhere in between is cool. No matter what, I love riding the coaster. But I must say, that I will never, out of choice, choose a middle car. I'll wait my turn for minutes for the front or back car. I just ride the middle with those who aren't up to the front or back as a courtesy.

*How does the Cyclone rate compared to other coasters you've ridden?*

There are two types of ratings. The Cyclone, and the others. I was on a roller coaster in Six Flags in Texas called The Cyclone. Supposedly modeled after the Coney Island Cyclone. First of all, it wasn't even wood. It had a shoulder harness and a seat belt and it didn't even make any noises. People were freaking, they were all scared. They don't even know the other half. As for other coasters, I definitely enjoy them. The Scream Machine and the Batman and Robin rides are great over in New Jersey, but it is a different feel. They are modern and loopy. The Cyclone is old and wooden and still kickin'. Although Rolling Thunder in Great Adventure is wooden and maybe a tad faster than the Cyclone, it is no way near as scary or as fun. You will have to ask me this question (again) in about a year when I complete my roller coaster cross-country trip.

*Have any interesting "Cyclone stories?"*

As for interesting Cyclone stories, I think riding it is interesting enough. Maybe a tip... The guy who usually works the (ticket) booth is slick. It costs \$4.00 to ride, and you are usually either pumped or scared to ride this machine, so money is hardly on your mind. If you hand the guy exact change you are worry free. But, if you give him any bill where you need change, beware, my man is sly. You put your money on the counter – he slides it back slowly – he rips a ticket for you and slides it towards you – and then he waits. If you are excited enough or out of your element you will take your ticket and walk away, but if you wait, he will eventually, after 5 seconds or so, look up at you, and if you are paying attention he will slide you back your change. What are you gonna do? Remember to dance around the turns! ¢

We stumbled, drunk and bloody, through Kelly's front door laughing at the sight of one of Kelly's roommates passed out on the floor between the living room and the kitchen. Another one of Kelly's roommates, Dominic, woke up and came down stairs to see what all the commotion was about. Seeing that I was way too drunk to be bothered with taking care of myself Dominic generously hooked me up with gauze and tape to patch up a fairly large scrape on my elbow. He also hooked me up with a new T-shirt to replace mine, which had gotten ripped in the fight. I stayed with them for about a week and, besides that night, had an awesome time in Portland. In fact, Portland was one of my favorite places that I visited in all my travels so far with an amazing group of people, activism, fun punk shows (one house show I went to even gave out free dumpster-dived beer!) and, of course, the beach house punks. ¢

## On The Road In Search Of... An Immorality Play

Mike White

"Don't be ripped off again." That was the first line of the ad. That didn't so much catch my eye as the fact that this organization accepted credit cards as payment. I certainly didn't have much room left on my Visa but I knew I didn't have the cash available. After some precarious juggling of finances, I managed to secure enough credit for my first encounter with an escort service.

When hearing the term "escort service," I had always thought that it was synonymous with prostitution. It's not. Certainly, there might be some shady operations out there that advertise as "escort services" that indeed provide sexual favors for money but this wasn't one of them. I found that out the hard way.

Maybe it was the way I was raised or the crazy world we live in but I have no moral qualms about prostitution. While I may resent paying for a little action, I can definitely see the necessity of it. And, indeed, I felt that urge on my first night in D.C.

I had gotten in early in order to check out the finer points of our nation's capitol. As it was, however, I hadn't eaten since hours before I caught my flight. Oddly, while my physical hunger grew, so did my sexual appetite. Airline peanuts and bitter coffee just didn't cut it. Neither did masturbation. Grabbing a City Paper as I checked in to my hotel, I went upstairs to look up restaurants and see what this city had to offer in "Adult Services."

More horny than hungry, I made a few calls and settled on a reasonably priced escort service before going out for some grub. I had talked to "Candice". She seemed nice enough. I don't have a head for measurements or even a proclivity towards one or more "featured item" on a woman. I try not to objectify the female body and subjugate it to dissection. I'm not an "ass, leg or breast man". I was going more on Candice's voice and what little of her personality I could glean from our conversation about rates. Apparently, there was a "special" going on as it was Sunday. Must be a slow night for escorts...

I don't think that Candice was quite as busty as she made herself out to be on the phone but she was very nice looking. A little overly made-up and heavily perfumed (I can still smell her on my telephone receiver) but attractive nonetheless. She wore a fake leather jacket, tall clunky heels with a form fitting top and pants. If I had seen her on the street I probably would have admired her figure but silently noted that her long, curly hair could use some work. A little more body and less hairspray.

As expected, she immediately got on the phone to "check in". She asked to see my poor, belabored credit card so that she could make an impression with it—everything had to be on the up and up, according to her. I believe that's when she first used the term "credit card fraud." It was a different card with a different number than I had given her contact earlier (as I said, I had to do some juggling). This required her to call my Visa company and pre-approve the charge. I don't know why I thought the evening

would be cheaper, but somewhere our math varied. Candice was suddenly five hundred dollars for three hours. Not wanting to appear cheap, I secretly hoped that her attempted charge wouldn't go through and this whole evening would be aborted.

This was not a moment to be confident. I had never been with a prostitute before so I wasn't sure of procedure. I didn't know what precautions had to be taken or what limits were going to be imposed. Miss Manners hasn't had a lot to say on social etiquette with escorts. I figured that I'd play up the shy angle and let nature take its course...if that damn charge went through.

Against all odds, it did. Damn. What to do? Candice wanted to know exactly what I had in mind at that moment. The clock was ticking. What did I have in mind?

How does one introduce screwing into polite conversation? After some hemming and hawing and some unnecessary back-story, I told her that I would like an *intimate evening* (nod nod, wink wink). I think I was still in a bit of shock after trying ever-so-hard to be euphemistic that Candice's immediate spiel about the laws on Washington D.C. prohibiting any man-woman interaction of the naked kind didn't immediately sink in. The evening had just taken a terrible turn. She explained, in no simple terms, that using a credit card for this service was grounds for fraud and that by taking money for sex she could be arrested for prostitution. Yeah, no shit.

Before I knew what was happening, Candice was on the phone to her contact explaining that I was under a false impression. Our date for the evening was being postponed until I could think of something nonsexual for the two of us to do together. "Hey, wait a minute," my mind struggle to comprehend through a fog of discomfiture, "I wanted to get laid, not to go out dancing."

Confusion and civility prevailed and I agreed to see Candice some other time under better circumstances. All I wanted was her to be out of my room now, as I felt humiliated. There's nothing worse than being forced to ask for sex and then being shot down (having the legalities of the matter bashed over one's head simultaneously does nothing for one's ego either). She passed me the telephone and beat feet out of my room. Dazed, I talked to her contact for a few minutes, vaguely agreeing to possibly having another evening. "An indefinite credit," they called it.

I racked the phone and then I stewed. And I stewed and I stewed and I stewed stewed. I stewed about prostitutes and five hundred dollars. I got so mad that I wanted to holler. How was I to know that this nefarious business was more up and up than its rap had presented?

**After some hemming and hawing and some unnecessary back-story, I told her that I would like an *intimate evening* (nod nod, wink wink).**

And then there was that debt that I now so resented. Five hundred dollars for five minutes of infamy? Did they really think they could do that to me? I turned on the television and I paced the room, all the while not realizing that I was under the boom. That five hundred charge had exceeded my credit line and now I was staying in this hotel on borrowed time. It all seemed so hopeless! There was nothing to do but stew and stew and stew and stew.

The thought stayed with me all night. There was only one thing I could think of. A word lit in neon bursting through my troubled mind. R-E-F-U-N-D. Of course, they'd refund my money! It was like ordering a pizza and only getting an empty box. I could give back maybe, say, fifty dollars if they weren't willing to give back the full amount since Candice did make the effort, after all.

As soon as the alarm went off the next morning, I was on the phone leaving a message at the service. When I got back from my daily grind there was no message on my voicemail. Uh-oh. I called

again. Still no answer. Another message left. A few more hours. Another call. Yet another message. An hour longer. A human voice!

Before I could even begin my tale I was told that there was a "no refund" policy. I warned the woman on the other end of the line that before she jumped to any hasty conclusions that she should speak to her manager. There was an unsatisfied customer on the other end of the line. "Call me back once you get the full story," I told her.

And call me back she did. What ensued was one of the most heated and pointless arguments I've ever had. I was informed that I was morally corrupt, that I had offended Candice by calling her a hooker (I did no such thing), and the real kicker was that I was now being blackmailed.

Yes, I should have known after all the chiding Candice did for me to explain "exactly" what I wanted to do with her that something fishy was going on. Though I am relying on hearsay, I was told that Candice was wired. Flaunting this "incriminating" tape, the woman on the other end of the phone (who claimed to be a manager) sat in judgement upon my case telling me that if I tried to renege on my five hundred dollar charge the tape would be given not only to my credit card company (who, she assured me, would prosecute me for fraud) but that a copy would find its way to my wife. That last bit drew a chuckle from me and I wondered if I could mask it as a sob, suddenly breaking down into a crying jag about my poor dead wife who suffered years of agony from ovarian cancer before passing away. I figured that *both* of us could be liars.

I suddenly felt akin to John DeLaurean and Marion Barry. I wondered if Linda Tripp was on the other end of the line.

She couldn't seem to understand that I had been under a false impression — by no fault of my own — that escorts provide sexual favors. Why else would a man shell out hundreds of dollars to a woman? It might be viewed as pathetic to pay for sex but it's far worse to pay for *no sex*! How could I be penalized for a general social assumption? Moreover, what would have happened if I had paid in cash — would she have taken the money, sapped me with a blackjack and headed for the hills?

I tried in vain to explain my position that no services had been rendered nor would any service ever be rendered and, thus, to charge five hundred dollars for nothing would be ludicrous. Whenever I got close to completing this argument, she would begin impugning my character and defending poor Candice. In addition, each mention of the word "refund" brought a renewed exhortation of "fraud." I finally had to ask her if she would ever cease being unreasonable. When she assured me she wouldn't I simply stated the word "refund" and hung up.

There was an uncomfortable silence in my room in the seconds that followed my slamming the receiver to its base. My mind was still racing. I quickly surmised that I have been completely fucked — and not in a good way. Even being proverbially "fucked in the ass" would have provided at least some prostate stimulation. No, I was facing a pain far worse — that of economic plight. My balancing act of credit cards has failed. The five hundred dollars put my one card over the limit while I waited for another card to do a balance transfer. I had the front desk of the hotel calling me on a regular basis and was forced to fend off a bellhop sent to my room who informed me, ever so gently, that I needed to get this matter straightened out. I feared that I might end up heading for those aforementioned hills myself. I wondered if John Kennedy's eternal flame could keep me warm. I doubted I could find out, however, since I probably lacked the funds to get over to Arlington.

So, when you're in Washington D.C., you're looking for a good time, and you don't want to be ripped off again, don't call 703-222-4385. Nevertheless, if you want three hours of company and you can't find anyone to hang out with, feel free to use my credit. Just ask for Candice.





# THIS AINT NO B-BOY

## 5014 5114 NI NAMOW

It's disheartening to say the least. That is, being a total hip hop fiend, yet rarely being able to get through an album, magazine or mix tape that isn't at least slightly misogynous. Women are often portrayed as hoes and gold diggers that are looked down upon and lyrically trod upon. But this is not the rule in hip hop, as many seem to believe. It is a type of macho posturing that popular media has gone crazy over, giving it more press than it ever deserved. As a result, such misogynous attitudes are strong in the rap artists that are most popular in North America. At the same time, female hip hoppers are taken less seriously than their male counterparts. This article is an attempt to diagnose the root of the obvious problem. With the popularity of hip hop on the rise, it is becoming even more important to understand the portrayal and involvement of women within it.

It's an acknowledged fact that there aren't as many women as there are men involved in hip hop culture. There are two obvious reasons for this. First, there aren't many women in hip hop. Because there are so few women who are involved very visibly and vocally in hip hop, it appears as a male-driven scene, inhospitable and possibly uninteresting to most women. Second, a good portion of mainstream hip hop music is overtly misogynous. When a woman turns on the radio and hears, "I'm thinking to myself, Why did I bang her? / Now I'm in the closet, looking for the hanger," beats and rhymes that may be infectious disappear under the weight of a back alley abortion threat. And this lyric by Ice Cube from his *AmeriKKKa's Most Wanted* album is by no means an anomaly. His career is practically built on spitting out lines that degrade women without remorse: "She said will you call me / Yeah I'll call you a bitch or a hoe after I ball ya."

 BY KAMILLA WYNNE

But the problem, for me, is that some MCs whose lyrics are sexist are also very talented artists that I want to listen to and put on mix tapes. Out of love for the music, sometimes you just have to try and see past it. To quote Joan Morgan's essay, *The Nigga Ya Love to Hate*, "You know this muthafucka must be bad if he

can scream bitch at me ninety-nine times and make me want to sing it." Nevertheless, I don't think I could sit through all of an NWA album, a group noted for its violent misogyny, without clenching my fists in a crazy rage. As Rev. Calvin O. Butts pointed out, "African-American women such as Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, Ella Baker, Sojourner Truth, and Fannie Lou Hamer, among others, did not struggle and jeopardize their lives to give young black music artists the temerity to refer to black women as bitches and whores." This is true, but what the Reverend isn't pointing out is why these young black music artists may be resorting to this kind of degradation.

There are many social implications, in terms of race and class, in the image that record companies create for mainstream rap artists. Middle-class white suburban males are the biggest consumers of rap music in the United States. Any artist signed to a major label is bound to be marketed to appeal to these white males, most of whom have preconceived notions of blackness. The result is that these artists end up selling a stereotype that benefits the ruling class. The white suburban boys have an idea of blackness that consists of misogyny, violence and offensiveness—gansta rap exaggerates that. This is not to say that the anger expressed in the music is not real. I'm most positive it is. But their anger at being underclass and racially discriminated against is being capitalized upon. While their misogyny is most likely connected issues such as uncertain masculinity and struggle in the broader sense of their race and class, it is transformed by the media and the record company executives into something geared around machismo and the hatred of women.

Azteca X, the female latino MC and activist, points out that when racially oppressed or underclass men act in a sexist fashion, it is different than when others do. When such men act the misogynist, they often act in such a manner in order to gain power over the one group they can gain power over. This isn't to say that this sexism should be excused, but

that it is much more complicated when issues of race and class are brought into the picture. It may be for this reason that strong female rappers such as Queen Latifah and Yo-Yo defend gansta rap. Before we judge the feelings that gansta rappers express in their songs, we must listen to their stories, because their experiences are important for us to understand. Simply passing them off as misogynous would be ignorant.

We know that rap artists as a group do not hate women, as much as they may seem to perpetuate sexist stereotyping. In reality, these rappers have also been supporting their female counterparts. 2Pac's "Keep Ya Head Up" backed underclass women in the face of President Clinton's blatantly misogynous welfare schemes. Almost every rapper has declared love for mothers. And gansta rappers have been the only ones to continue outwardly and strongly defending the poor women who took to the streets to steal food and other commodities for their children during the Los Angeles Rebellion. Even Ice Cube attacks "Mr. Sexual Harassment ([for] Asking for a blow while the answer is 'fuck no'") in his song "Horny Little Devil." Obviously these men know whom they stand with in their hearts. Neither the radio nor MTV ever have or will make a point of highlighting these instances. They are there to sell records and keep the status quo thriving. That's it.

In my opinion, a lot of these young new rappers can see that what puts you in the spotlight is being outrageous, shocking and sensational. In some ways this could be productive—criticizing capitalism and systematic racist oppression, for instance. But the music industry, being that it profits off both these things, would in no way allow it. What is allowed is to shock through a disgusting and violent portrayal of women and life in the ghetto. Money talks when it raps these rhymes.

But women have risen in an environment that sometimes seems to be overrun with misogyny. It may have all began in 1979 when Sha-Rock came onto the scene via the Funky Four + One More's hit "That's the Joint." She was the "one more." This track was released by Sugarhill Records, a company that boasts Sylvia Robinson as its longtime owner and president. Sugarhill has its claim to fame as the first hip hop label.

More noise was made in the female camp when the young Roxanne Shante became the first woman to address the misogyny within the world of hip hop. Her song "Roxanne's Revenge," was a comeback to rap group U.T.F.O.'s "Roxanne, Roxanne"—a song which puts down a girl for refuting the group's come-ons.

Since then, the mainstream has produced a fair number of female artists, including Salt 'n' Pepa, Queen Latifah, Yo-Yo, MC Lyte, Lauryn Hill, Sister Souljah, Mia X, Foxy Brown, and Lil' Kim. While a number of these artists have done some good work to get women on an equal



BAHAMADIA  
PHOTO BY PIOTR SIKORA

#### KAMILLA'S TOP 5 FEMALE MCS

**KOKO-** representin' the West Coast! This MC is featured on Project Blowed... and that's about all I know about her... except that she drops some wicked styles on that album and is known to spend some time in the company of Medusa! Look for her, I'm sure she's coming up.

**BAHAMADIA-** representin' Philly! Not just an (amazing) MC, but a mom, DJ, and radio personality. She released her own full-length album *Kollage*. She's collaborated with the Roots and is currently part of a group called Army of the Pharaohs with 7L & Esoteric, Jedi Mind Tricks, and others. If you're in Philadelphia, make sure to check out her radio show.

**T-LOVE-** representin' the West Coast! Known as the Billie Holiday of rap, her EP *Return of the B-Girl* is worth being stampeded by bloodthirsty elephants to get. And she's not only an MC, but also a freelance journalist who has done much work with *URB* magazine.

**WHAT WHAT-** representin' NYC! Daughter of jazz pianist Abdullah Ibrahim, she is part of an NYC crew by the name of Natural Resource. They've had a 3-song EP out on White Label a couple years back, and are rumored to be recording a full-length album. In the meantime you can check out her dope appearances with London's the Herbalizer and a solo project under the pseudonym Jean Grai.

**MEDUSA-** representin' the West Coast! Another Project Blowed vet, check her *Do It the Way You Feel It* EP. She's got so much style with that Los Angeles underground flow that she's impossible to resist. Her voice is dominant and her rhymes are innovative.

footing within hip hop music, others are attributed with ruining the credibility of female MCs.

Lil' Kim and Foxy Brown are the women who are most often criticized for continuing to perpetuate the gold digging hoe stereotype pinned on black women through rap songs. The proof is in the lyrical pudding. On her album *Hardcore*, Lil' Kim raps:

*He was a trick when I sucked his dick  
Used to pass me bricks, credit cards and shit  
Suck him to sleep, I took the keys to the jeep  
Tell him 'I'll be back,' go fuck with some other  
cats Flirtin', gettin' numbers, in the summer,  
hoe hop*

Some consider it blaxploitation, a devastating trend that has black women selling records because of their coarse sexuality. Others see it as retaliation—these women have developed playa personas that mirror those of the male rappers. Either way, the materialistic, violent, lewd rap star is just a persona that sells records. Foxy Brown is attributed with admitting, "Foxy is just a character I become when I am out. At home I'm not like this at all. I am in my sweats and I am just chilling." Nevertheless, when Lil' Kim rhymes, "See, that's the difference between me and other bitches / They fuck to get they riches," it's obvious that the female playa, just like the male, is doing no one any good.

To find music less tainted by capitalist greed and mainstream trends, look towards the underground hip hop scene, which houses a number of amazing female MCs.

*Project Blowed* is a compilation that was produced in LA in the early 90s. It features the best of the West Coast underground artists, and many women are present among the ranks. MCs include T-Love, Medusa, KoKo, BJ, Nefertiti, and the group Figures of Speech.

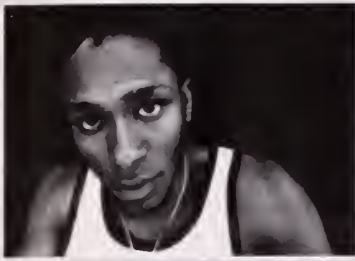
Females must fight for respect in no matter what subculture they are involved with. Of course, it's not always an easy task for males to gain respect, but it's always a little bit harder to make the world take you seriously when you're a woman. Hip hop culture houses some of the strongest, most outspoken women anywhere, and they should be getting their due respect. To quote Adam Sexton, editor of a most informative book called *Rap on Rap*:

*Rap music shares much with its sometime hip hop handmaidens graffiti and breakdancing- plugging your system into a streetlight is a lot like painting a subway car in the trainyard by night or spinning on your head on a piece of cardboard on the sidewalk.*

In other words, hip hop is resourceful, audacious, perhaps even truly heroic. Women know what's up, and will continue to make noise in the hip hop scene until our voices rise to an equal level with the rest. There can only be more of us. ☿



# Mos Def



Number four on *ego trip* magazine's "Shit List" (beating out "fake-ass music industry fucks", "Rudolph Giuliani" and "conniving exotic dancers") is "Rap, an unorganized mess, that nothing - not even this book - can clean up properly." It ain't hard to believe, and sometimes it looks like things are getting worse before they get better. In the last few months, the line between felony and publicity has blurred, as the hip hop gangsta persona that still gets kids killed

for their shoes on the streets has become some kind of campy reverse-drag queen trip. While hip hop's biggest living playas Jay-Z and Puffy earn assault and weapons charges at Manhattan clubs, in Brooklyn the Wu Tang Clan continues to rack up as many parole violations as they have aliases. And in the Bronx, the *Village Voice* reported in February on the underground "gay thug" scene, where it's okay to be gay as long as you ain't a "fag." Even the people who suffer most from hip hop's violent, testosterone-bloated stereotypes feel a need to conform to them.

Luckily, the 718 area code, like hip hop, is a damn big place, and it just keeps expanding. The back of every stop sign in the metro area has a Mos Def sticker on it for Brooklyn's newest hip hop prophet, and it's finally time to believe the hype. Mos Def delivers his state of the union on track two of *Black on Both Sides*: "The industry [is] just a better-built cell block." With that edict, Mos Def summons up some of the smoothest beats since Tribe Called Quest first dissed the Business, and drops the most positive science since KRS-One: "Hip hop will simply amaze you / praise you / pay you / do whatever you say do / but black it can't save you."

Not that that means there ain't nothing worth saving. Tracks on the album cover all kinds of social issues (when was the last time a rapper made an articulate argument for unpolluted global tap water? That you can dance to?). Deflating the puffy-coat Gangsta fantasy, Mos Def proves that street cred is more than threads and thugging on "Got," a warning to anybody high-rolling late night on the same streets where people go hungry. Brooklyn earns its own three-part tribute, complete with a Red Hot Chili Peppers quote from "Under the Bridge"

(although according to my roommate, Mos actually hangs out *across* the bridge on the lower east side a lot). "Habitat" follows as a testament to staying true to your roots and your home. The tracks celebrate the people of Brooklyn for their pride, their flaws, and their perseverance, because "Brooklyn keep on takin it / worldwide we known for that." And lest anybody think Mos is all lyrics where community outreach is concerned, visit Nkiru Books, the multicultural political bookstore he co-owns with ex-Black Star collaborator Talib Kweli at 76 St. Mark's Ave. It's run by their moms.

Like his work in Black Star, *Black on Both Sides* promotes ethnic pride and denounces racism from every angle, from the black panther chorus of "Do It Now" featuring Busta Rhymes, to the statistics of inequality and poverty on "Mathematics." Ending a streak of outperforming his solo work in cameo appearances, Q-Tip collaborates on one of the album's less-original tracks, "Mr. Nigga," a derivative of the old Quest standard "Sucka Niggas." "Rock and Roll" gives the most incisive and pointed assault, targeting the record industry for consistently promoting copy-cat white artists over the pioneering music of their black contemporaries. Mos tracks the history of payola and crayola from Elvis Presley and Chuck Berry to Korn and Limp Bizkit's rip off of Bad Brains and Fishbone, including a punk coda that beats on the brats at their own sorry game. The song is the consummation of Chuck D's line in "Fight the Power," "Elvis was a hero to most / but he never meant shit to me."

For those who aren't used to anything more political than "Thong Song," there's plenty of musical sugar to choke down the medicine, too. Mos eschews the standard disco and 80s samples for Aretha Franklin on "Ms. Fat Booty," and often uses live instrumentation, playing his own drums, bass, and keyboards on several tracks, with a smooth transition from jazz to hip hop, and even to 3-chord punk. But it's not dancibility that will turn hip hop back to being the CNN of the streets from its current status as the Shasta McNasty of the mall food court; it's the message that distinguishes *Black on Both Sides* from the rest of the pap rap on the shelves and the Tommy ads. Check *ego trip*'s list of Reasons Why Rap Will Never Die numbers five and six, respectively: "Niggas got things to say" and "It kicks harder than Tae Bo."

Kate Wood



part two of a discussion with Columbus, Ohio graffiti writers

*In part one of this series I sat down with Nerd and Emote of KNK Crew out of Columbus, Ohio to discuss the history, art, and political motivation behind the graffiti subculture. We talked about their personal involvement, gentrification, capitalism, materialism, the public's reaction to graffiti, as well as the emotions and political implications involved in being a graffiti writer. This is part two of that discussion.*

CLAMOR: What would you say are some of the greatest misconceptions about graffiti and graffiti writers?

EMOTE: That it's gang-related.

NERD: That everyone who does graffiti is black; or other-than-white. That we're all gangsters, selling drugs.

C: What kind of racial and socio-economic backgrounds are found in the graffiti subculture? How do they compare to the stereotype of urban black youth?

E: It's definitely young people doing it.

N: It's young people that start doing it, but there are people who are around now that are 40-some-odd years old and still

photos and text by Lee Pasado, Nerd and Emote

going.

E: But you know, it's mostly male.

N: It's male dominated.

E: There's lots of female writers, but it is male dominated. I would say that there are a lot of inner-city kids, and then there's a lot of suburban kids too, you know? It's just like anything. It obviously started in the inner-city, it was an inner-city thing, but now everyone is doing it.

N: And I would say that it was mostly Afro-American centered back in the day, but there definitely were writers back then that were white. And they were like some of the innovators and beginners of that shit, too. It was basically just like city kids, you know?

E: I think another misconception is its place in hip-hop. Anyone who's down with underground hip-hop culture knows that graffiti is definitely one of the elements. A lot of people who are into hip-hop don't even know about graffiti.

N: Well, if you could call some of the stuff most people call hip-hop hip-hop. See the big thing between your Puff Daddy-ass shit and your underground hip-hop is that the underground hip-hop remembers the fundamentals.

E: The Four Elements.

N: Breakin', emcecin', b-boyin', deejayin'; that's like the elements. You'll find that your crap-rap is all about the papers, making money and shit, and they aren't about the elements and supporting kids that are out there starting their own shit in small town scenes. And that's why you get a lot of negative attitudes, I think, in the ghetto mentality, is that the theme music for them is like Master P, which is just all about the papers. If that's your deal then that's cool, but it's not cool.

E: Just in general are the misconceptions about the people who do it. I don't know what people think, I don't even want to know what people think. You see people just fucking hate graffiti because I know that they think the people who do it are just the most despicable people on earth.

N: Let's take for example the Tuttle Park wall (a park in Columbus where writers have been commissioned to paint).

E: A legal wall that our friends have been painting where people have just been coming up to these kids when they're painting this beautiful mural.

N: Well they started out by complementing them. They started out with this city-scape, and it was really dope and everyone came up and was complementing them. Then they started painting the pieces in the corners that say North, South, East, and West. And it was also like a picture of Columbus, it wasn't just any city-scape, it was Columbus downtown. People came up and were calling the cops on them. They were telling them, "Oh, we got permission to do this," and they were still calling the cops—and telling them that they thought it was shit, that they were low-life scum, that they would never amount to anything, shit like that! It's just fucked up!

C: I've seen that piece, and it's not just kids writ-

ing their names on a wall, it's fucking beautiful.

N: It's art!

C: It's really, really nice.

N: See, the average person doesn't see the ill pieces that go on. They don't see the shit that goes on, you know what I mean?

C: It just goes to show what kind of superficial culture we live in that something so bright and colorful and active seems like something ugly.

N: And it says something to you too.

E: The thing is it's like those kids are painting this beautiful fucking mural, but just the fact that they were doing it with spray cans, literally, that was the reason, that they were doing it with spray paint.

C: So if they were out there with a palette and a paintbrush it would be a different story.

E: A whole different story. And I don't know if this will be covered later so I'll just say it now, I am really against like this whole distinction between tagging and piecing, they are obviously different, but they are all the same. I firmly believe that, because a lot of people that are down for graffiti are down for pieces like, "Oh yeah I like it when people do nice stuff", or they'll come up to me and be like, "I don't like tags and stuff, I like when people do nice colorful stuff." They will look at magazines and be like, "This is good graffiti, I wish this was on High Street."

N: The most 3-D ass, design student shit.

E: And all that shit's dope as fuck, but coming from a graffiti standpoint, graffiti is about getting your name up. The only reason why it's super dope is because you're out to impress, you're out to be fucking top, you're out to be number one. Express yourself! A tag on a wall is the same thing as a piece that someone took 15 hours to do. It's your name and it's in the public eye, that's all it is. It's the same thing. And if you're down for one, you're down for all of 'em. If you're not down for bombing everything, you're not down for graffiti.

N: Yeah, to truly support graffiti you have to love it in and of itself, intrinsically. A tag on a fucking car, shit like that. Cars are fucking evil, know



what I mean? Sure I wouldn't necessarily be happy if someone tagged my car, but then I couldn't really get mad if somebody tagged my car. I would just hope that it would be a pretty quality tag! And I have had my car tagged!

E: A lot of people will say shit about tagging cars and houses and stuff. For the most part, most writers respect personal property.

N: Personal, personal property.

E: And I totally do, but at the same time I'm not going to dis people who tag cars, tag houses. I would never do that, you know, schools, churches, people's houses, and their own shit, like their cars and shit, that's different. Because in our world, property really is power.

N: Property is everything. Basically we're living in a modern-day extension of the feudal system. We have landlords, which are pretty much equivalent to the "lords" in the feudal system who owned the land on which the people worked to pay the landlord a tax to live on their land. I live in a house where I have a landlord that I have to pay rent each fucking month.

C: How would you respond to someone who said graffiti is defacing or vandalizing private property?

E: I would say that they're right, I mean it is vandalism.

N: According to your dictionary definition of vandalism, yeah!

E: But it's almost like destruction, which I disagree with. Having graffiti everywhere doesn't change anything. All it does is get people mad because they want everything to look quote-unquote pretty and nice and blank, you know, like what we were talking about before. So if they were saying what I was doing was a negative thing, I would just be like, fuck. It's so funny the lengths that people will go to to argue with me over concrete. They're arguing with me because I put paint on concrete. God-for-fucking-bid.

C: What kind of publications and resources are there available to graffiti writers?

E: Magazines? Magazines are just blowing up, they're just coming out of everywhere, I mean everywhere. Mad websites. All sorts of people are doing books. Like when I first started check-



ing out graffiti you know there was like, the classics. Subway Art. Bomb the Suburbs, yeah, a handful of books. Now every other dude's writing a book, you know?

N: I think it's basically due to the information explosion, like the whole internet bullshit. Super sit on my ass and get my kicks through a computer screen while not going out and experiencing shit myself. But—

E: It's blowing up, man. Scenes are just growing like crazy.

N: Yeah. Every day I see a new tag that is undecipherable—

E: Yeah let's talk about Columbus. Columbus right now is wrecked, a lot of kids are getting up like crazy. It goes through waves, like they'll clean shit up and everyone will be kinda chilling, and then kids will just go out and wreck shit. That's basically what's going on right now, there's mad new heads coming up.

N: I don't even really think about those new jacks, because a lot of times you'll see just this toy tag up everywhere, for six months or something like that, and then after that you'll never see it again. So I don't even think about those kids unless I see them really developing, really trying to become better.

E: There's two ways to see it, I mean obviously I'm a supporter of graffiti and think that everyone should do it no matter what their shit looks like. But within the graffiti culture there is an appreciation for things like hand-styles, skills! That's what it's all about. I think everyone should get up, but within our culture we're very critical of other people's work.

N: We defend our space. It's like everyone gets defensive over their space. When you see toys (a shitty-ass writer) they can be good and still be a toy because of their attitude or shit like that. When you see toys getting up all over the place it's kinda frustrating because you feel like they're taking up space that you could be doing shit in. That's why people go over people and people

get pissed at each other. Back in the day people would battle over things like that, one person would do a piece, then another person would do a piece and it would be judged on their skill.

C: Is there a network that exists on any large level in graffiti?

E: There's a network as in like you know who does it, but—

N: It's not like punk rock, there's not like meetings. Well, I guess there are meetings, just not like graffiti meetings.

E: Yeah there are, there's conventions all the time.

N: But those are hip-hop conventions, most of which unfortunately don't include graffiti.

E: Exclude graffiti, I know, but like I was saying, we know writers who are up in other towns.

N: Well that's because of magazines and the internet, but you don't actually speak with them.

E: But you would if they came to your city and you would eventually meet them. There's a million writers, there are, but it's a small world.

N: Somebody knows somebody who knows somebody.

E: I think it's definitely comparable to the punk rock scene in that respect.

C: What places are really blowing up right now?

E: California, Europe.

N: The Midwest.

E: I think the Midwest is getting represented.

N: Well because it's getting represented people are getting respect.

E: Kansas City.

N: Minneapolis.

E: Cincinnati is fucking blowing up.

N: The thing is you'll notice that all those cities are cities where magazines come from. Let's say if there was a serious magazine like *Scribble* or *While You Were Sleeping*. If you knew somebody who was putting that magazine out, in Cincy it's like all those kids jock the dude from the magazine, it drives them to go out and do shit and get better. The dude from the magazine will always put certain people in, cause he thinks that they're good.

E: Magazines are fucked up. They're good because they let people know what's going on in other cities, but they only let you know what the person who puts it together thinks is good in graffiti. In a way, if you haven't been to a city, you don't really know what it's about. You can't really say that one city is blown up and another one isn't.

N: The freight scene (pieces on rail cars) is definitely blown up.

C: Will you explain the difference between pieces and just tags or throw-ups?

E: Tagging is what the average everyday person thinks of as graffiti.

N: A scribble.

E: Unreadable shit.

N: Tagging is just like writing your name on a wall. A marker, spraypaint, just a simple line drawing.

E: And then a throw-up is your name again, but more color, bubble letters, fancier, whatever you have time to get

away with. But then a piece is like, you know, short for masterpiece. Tons of colors, real intricate, big, that's what it's all about.

C: What are the challenges of having this other identity, this alter-ego behind the name?

E: It's hard, man. The challenges are keeping things secret.

N: Making sure the right people know. Those who know know. And those who don't don't, and let's keep it that way.

E: It's really hard, I use to catch a lot of shit, cause people just don't understand. It's really hard for other people who aren't involved to understand.

N: To grasp the ideas.

E: When we're hanging out with our crew, with other writers, it's a lot different than when I'm just hanging out with my friends. They don't understand how much it means to me, they don't understand because they're not doing it.

N: But it's liberating almost to have this alter-ego, you can act crazy and shit. It's fun. It's naming yourself. Self-actualization, self definition. Giving yourself your own name. I think it's pretty powerful.

E: It's totally true man, your writer name is like who you are at night, when you're creeping through alleys, hitting a spot or doing illegal stuff. You're representing yourself in a whole different way.

*Hopefully this dispenses with a lot of the mystique and misconceptions surrounding graffiti and its proponents. Not a bunch of ego-driven drug-running thugs, nor the champions of the oppressed some would like to believe; it is an extremely diverse and non-centralized movement of individuals with different goals and perceptions. Perhaps the only common ground is the basic human need of self-expression, and a healthy contempt for capital, property and the powers that perpetuate their stale traditions. For a deeper and more thorough exploration of the graffiti movement, I highly recommend the book "Bomb the Suburbs" by William Upski Wimsatt. Thanks for reading. c*



# NOT JUST POSING

## A DISCUSSION OF PUNK AND THE NEW 'ABOLITION'

article and art by Amanda Luker



*I am a poseur and I don't care;  
I like to make people stare.  
-X-Ray Spex, I Am A Poseur*

I fell into a seat on the El with the haziness of a new day suffocating my brain, only really concentrating on the next few tasks ahead of me: picking up my morning coffee, going to class, buying some groceries, cashing my check, and maybe stopping by Ear Wax for a movie for later. Staring at the buildings drifting by, I let my thoughts drift to Catherine Deneuve and Bridget Bardot's hair until I heard near me, "I mean, I would disown my daughter if she came home looking like that...why would you do that to yourself?" The lavender hairs on the back of my head prickled and my ears burned as I fiddled with the cold silver loops rimming the outer edge. My feelings are easily crushed; how many more stops until I could escape? But I needed to stop running from this recurring criticism. The two White women discussing my appearance enjoyed the discomfort they could see I was feeling. "Hmmpmph," the larger one grunted as she looked me in the eye and slowly shook her head, her large breasts heaving with her disapproving sigh. "It just looks horrible!" the other one moaned. I swallowed tentatively, tasting the metal protruding from my lips, gathering some strength to confront the seat curmudgeons.

I'd been working on my argument and polishing my points, just for this kind of occasion when I would have to defend fishnets and tattoos and even the holey Dicks T-shirt to the close-minded and loud-mouthed Chicagoan. Oh, I was ready.

The words I really wanted stuck in my throat as the women grimaced at each other, then at me, and stood to exit at the State Street stop. "What?" I quietly be-



# FOR THE POSTCARD

gan, which was meant to be followed with, "...does my appearance signify to you? Am I damaging my inherent privilege of bonding with you as a 'normal White person?' And am I threatening the stability of yours? I fucking hope so." But I was too reserved, and too late.

Before risking taking this idea way too seriously, I have to note that young folks in the punk community often begin to dress outrageously as a form of rebellion only against their parents, their first and most obvious constricts. Also, it is common for young punks to dress a certain way just to fit in with others in the punk community. I am looking more at folks who have been involved for some length of time, and are politically aware and active. I am talking about the people who, like me, decided they were "non-conformists" when they were pre-pubescent, and today still dress in a way that tells the White businessman they pass downtown that they are not cut from the same cloth, and would never choose to be.

## Sartorial Separatists

In Noel Ignatiev and John Garvey's *Race Traitor* anthology, a collection of essays taken from their groundbreaking *Race Traitor* magazine, Ignatiev describes a small incident that casts some light onto how appearance can work in American society. One morning in the early 70s, Ignatiev was boarding a bus to work, and as the bus pulls away from the curb, a young man with long hair, common among rebellious youth at the time, ran to catch it. The bus driver ignores the man, and mumbles that he would have stopped, had the man worn his hair short! At this time, long hair on a man acted as a "badge of membership in a brotherhood cast out of official society," the same way skin color worked for Black folks in America.

In *Soul on Ice*, published in 1968, at the height of youth social uprisings, Eldridge Cleaver, an ex-Black Muslim and an important member of the Black Panther Party, titled a chapter White Race and its Heroes, using it to talk about the role White youth played in the struggle for Black freedom during the 60s, as well as their intrigue with Black culture. He saw not only their politics as important, but also the accouterments that went along with the counterculture as a means to show other White folks they were serious. Cleaver said, "The characteristics of the white rebels which most alarm their elders—the long hair, the new dances, their love for Negro music, their use of marijuana, their mystical attitude toward sex—are all tools of rebellion." (Cleaver, p. 77.)

Long hair on men really lost its incredible stigma by the end of the 70s, just when punk was emerging and creating the same kind of outsider group through its aesthetics, meant to politicize those who viewed them. In England in 1977, the Clash, one of the most influential punk bands, declared themselves anti-racist, anti-violent and anti-fascist. To communicate their message, they often stenciled phrases on their working-class attire: Joe Strummer would wear a boiler suit on stage donning the words "Hate and War," describing exactly what he saw around him. (When I was 15, with red paint and a stencil, I took that timeless message to my shirts, too, after perusing old Clash pictures, and that was in 1993.)

At the time, Malcolm McLaren's Sex Pistols were also doing a good job of riling up the youth, and scaring the general public. They, however, were much more violent and less eloquent than the Clash, making the important political messages harder to discern and giving punk the "fuck everything" image. However, the nonconformity in punk was plenty obvious in their style, which mainly came from McLaren's King's Road boutique, Sex. The shop was filled with T-shirts held to-

gether with safety pins (the idea stolen from American band Television's Richard Hell), bondage pants, T-shirts with Situationist slogans, and lots of leather and rubber gear.

In rebellion against gender roles in society, and to reverse ideas of women being controlled by men sexually, punk produced styles that toyed with both androgyny and hyper-sexuality. Bands like the New York Dolls, keeping one eye on David Bowie, acted the flamboyant, androgynous male, while women like Penelope Houston and Chrissie Hynde downplayed their own sexuality. Poly Styrene, still in braces when she began with X-Ray Spex, played up her child-like appearance, with loud, florescent clothes, and sang about sexual subjects only as metaphors for capitalist greed. To reclaim women's power in visceral realms as well as to encourage voyeurism, punk, especially with McLaren's Sex shop, produced many pseudo-dominatrices, clad in scant vinyl and rubber, with revealing cutaways and superfluous zippers and chains. Among the famous hyper-sexualized female punks were Siouxsie Sioux and Poison Ivy from the Cramps (along with her gender bending hubby, Lux Interior.)

Many punks in the early days were influenced by the Futurist art movement, which encouraged a rejection of previous norms and relied heavily on audience performance, much like punk shows (concerts). The Futurist style (anti-art) of heavy makeup, bright clothing and dangling earrings was continued with what are now known as fashion or postie (postcard) punks.

The DIY (Do-It-Yourself) aesthetic of punk was fluid and changing, as it still is today, but the overwhelming statement of the bricolages of punk was satire, with each item acting as a symbol. Business attire was adapted as bondage gear and spray painted with political statements, and military gear worn to show disgust with violence and war. In her book, *Pretty in Punk*, Lauraine Leblanc analyzes British punk style as sartorial political statements, "Wearing safety pins and garbage bags and adopting such monikers as Johnny Rotten, Rat Scabies, Richard Hell and Poly Styrene, punks sought to demonstrate that, as lower-class youth, they were rejected by society prior to their own rejection of society..." (Leblanc, pp. 40-41.)

Hairstyles were also used to confront mainstream ideals, with liberty spikes, bright colors and shaved sections. The most important is probably the mohawk, because one can't revert to a normal look after shaving a hawk (there is no looking normal for that job interview).

Later styles stemming from punk went in many directions, though many have kept the original punk aesthetics alive. Hardcore style in the 80s was characterized by a uniform, of "combat boots, torn jeans, leather jackets, spiked armbands and dog collars, and mohawks. (Leblanc, p. 52.) To keep shocking outsiders, punks began to get more daring: piercings and tattoos became more common and punks became more masculine and violent. Crusty or gutter punk, a relatively new phenomenon, stemmed from these punks' rejection of capitalist America's concern with status and wealth. Gutter punks wore dark, drab clothing, often squatting, dumpster-diving for food and sparechange for money. They incorporated punk with the lifestyle of the streets, often with dreadlocked hair and dirty clothes. This look once again created a shock to the American mainstream.

## Historic Relations of Punk and Race

From the startling birth of the culture, punk has had the incredible potential to act as a (mostly) White auxiliary to movements by people of color. While scrawling their messages on their suit coats and ties, the

Clash also wrote songs that demonstrated a keen understanding of how race and class worked to reinforce each other in a system of oppression:

*Black men got a lot of problems  
But they don't mind throwing a brick  
White men go to school  
Where they teach you to be thick  
So everybody does what they're told  
And everybody eats supermarket soul food  
—"White Riot"*

In the early days of British punk, there was heavy borrowing from the working class Black immigrant youth population and their music, reggae. Punks identified with their Rastafarian ideas of revolt against Babylon, but only seeing Babylon as the fascism of mainstream British society. Don Letts, a Rastafarian DJ who at one point played reggae in between punk bands at the Roxy, and many punk bands began to fuse reggae beats with their music. The Clash recorded several reggae covers, including "Pressure Drop" and "Police and Thieves." Other bands that borrowed from reggae included the Slits, the Raincoats and early Police.

Later crossover has never been taken too seriously in the punk community: Blondie and the Clash with the rap community in the early 80s, and the Beastie Boys moving from hardcore into hip-hop. Bad Brains, an 80s DC hardcore band, was one of the few to make a successful meld of traditionally Black music (reggae) and hardcore. They were also one of the few all-Black bands in punk and hardcore history, ever.

The relation of punks and skinheads, however, has been one of the biggest setbacks for punks creating alliances for racial justice. Thanks to the media, many people believe that punks and skins are interchangeable, their politics the same, which simply is not true. Skinheads, though not overarchingly true of all factions, have a history of nationalism, racism, homophobia, sexism and fascism—just the opposite of punks. Although some skins have made an effort to create a new breed of skinheads that are politically left (such as SHARPs, Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice), the association is nonetheless there. One day, while I was walking toward the train in the heart of southside Chicago, a group of Black kids yelled at me from across the street. "Skinhead!" they taunted, which put me in a rough position. I don't know why they thought I was a skin—I was wearing a long skirt and had grown out my hair. I wasn't going to cross the street and try to explain the nuances of the differences, so I just kept moving, but the whole experience dampened my hope that people of color would recognize me as an ally.

Despite the bands mentioned above, there has been a noticeable lack of discussion of race in punk lyrics. Always, as if programmed, bands say they are "anti-fascist, anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic," all in one breath, and punk zines adamantly refuse to print any "homophobic, sexist, fascist or racist shit." Punks in general have always been quick to condemn the KKK and roust them out, seeking out the extremes, who, I argue, do not pose the biggest threat to racial justice in the United States. (It is those in power and making systemic decisions—White men—who generally aren't overtly racist.)

Ideally, an integral part of the development of White punks from middle-class backgrounds is a rejection of their inherent privilege, including skin color privilege. In Craig O'Hara's *Philosophy of Pmk*, Joel from *Profane Existence*, an influential leftist punk magazine, talked about his thoughts on punk's relationship to struggles of race in America: "We are the inheritors of the white supremacist, patriarchal, capitalist world order. A prime position as defenders of the capital and the overseers of the underclass has been set-aside for us by our parents, our upbringing, our culture, our history, and yet we have the moral gump-tion to reject it. As punks we reject our inherited race and class positions because we know they are bullshit." (O'Hara, p. 24)

## Punks as Potential Race Traitors

In the past decade or so, ideas of race in America have been rapidly changing. More and more, White folks, even in the mainstream, are owning up to the reality of racial privilege, as well as the inherent truth that "race" actually doesn't exist, and was actually a creation to promote domination by those already in power. "Race" itself, cannot in any way be nailed down as a genetic or physiological reality, but was an important belief of those who founded this country. When the term "White" is used to describe someone, unfounded associations are made, due to Americans' race-conscious socialization, just as the term "Black" comes fraught with associations. (This is why I choose to capitalize White and Black: none of those people are actually white or black. The terms are social descriptors, relating to the way the people relate to and are treated by society.) To be clear, to abolish race is not to diminish the importance of culture and heritage. To pretend like everyone is the same (to be color-blind) is perhaps one of the greatest mistakes liberals have ever made in the hopes of taming racial tensions in America.

I have mixed feelings about recent attempts of punk bands and zines to articulate their position in understanding race. A few years back, I saw a Minneapolis band try to begin a discussion while onstage with the audience on why the scene was so White. It was a heartfelt attempt: the idea piqued my interest, and I was pleased that these folks were interested in having a diverse audience. However, the crowd was not interested in discussing it, for various reasons. I no longer wish for a multi-cultural audience (and Minneapolis already has a healthy Latino/punk contingent); I hope for the White punks to make alliances and build bridges to other cultures with similar goals. Yeah, punk is pretty White.

Also, there is a hardcore band out of Chicago actually called "Race Traitor." In many of their songs they demonize White culture: *white empire built on top of a golden pedestal...white kingdom plastic culture on top of the enslaved and colonized...on top of their swollen naked corpses gorging off their blood and slag...kill white culture...*  
—H-3030

Despite their faults (the band has been chided for their abrupt and perhaps condemning tone and often dogmatic approach), they were one of the few bands out there willing (more than willing) to discuss whiteness and racial privilege. In fact, it is difficult to find American bands who write songs about racial oppression, the large exception being Latino bands (who are on the receiving end), like Huasipungo and Los Crudos ("we're that Spic band!")

Among zines, the literary arm of punk, the story recently is a bit different. *After the Revolution #2* contains a thoughtful printed discussion on gentrification, citing how White punks and artists are often the first to cross into lower-income neighborhoods of color, setting off the process of gentrification. *Praxis #2* includes words, much like those of the Black Panthers, which inform White folks to be allies of people of color by working "on racism for your sake, not for 'their' sake." Also, to be an ally does not mean to organize communities of color or fighting anyone else's battles. The author encourages Whites to look at themselves, and to talk to the White community about those seemingly invisible privileges. The recently-defunct *Primordial Soup Kitchen #3* includes a quick analysis. Sean says, "White America (or at least those who identify themselves as white) and those who benefit from having white skin, view themselves as morally pure...[under this system] All must conform to whiteness because it is superior." The *Antipathy* zine contains an article rejecting the notion of White skin privilege, arguing that "not all whites are created equal." Although I believe the author here has missed the point, I am pleased that he and so many other zine writers are at least engaging in the discussion.

This discussion of race will hopefully bloom into something much greater, and punk will be widely known as a strong ally of movements



for the rights of people of color. In my dream, people of color will see me and not think how weird I look, but recognize me as a friend.

I had that experience once: seated in a room full of mostly White college students in one of the most poverty-stricken Black neighborhoods in the United States, I felt a bit caught. My folding chair squeaked as I turned to take in my surroundings. We were waiting for a speaker in a meeting room of a community center in the heart of Cabrini Green, the notorious public housing project on Chicago's north side. The group I came with were fresh-faced White liberal, artsy-fartsy students, ready to save the world. But, wasn't that me? I was even confused. How was I different? In my mind, I knew my ideas were much more revolutionary and my methods more daring, but was this apparent to everyone else?

A young Black woman stood at the front to begin her lecture on public housing. With a cheerful grin she said, "Well, just looking at you all, I can tell you're down." She paused and raised her finger to me, leafing through my notebook back in the third row. "Especially her."

Before concluding, there are a few more qualifications I must throw in, for fear of misrepresenting myself. In 1977, punk was scary, new and unpredictable. In 1984, punk was proving it wasn't dead, and bands and writers were finding new and important ways of showing disapproval of mainstream society's practices and attitudes. In 2000, punk is no longer new, the punk look has been co-opted by many apolitical subcultures (ravers, goths) and DIY can be purchased at a shop at the Mall of America. We must find new ways to grow, prove we are still relevant and, yes, continue to shock people, whether by appearances or by ideas, which brings me to my second qualification. Although punk looks are helpful in showing dissatisfaction and disassociation

with force-fed mainstream culture, nothing is as shocking as a well-thought out, rebellious idea, or a well-planned culture jamming act.

To all the punks, one of the most important things that could strengthen the political punk movement and create ways for White punks to understand their place in the way race is constructed, is for punks to form alliances with the hip-hop community. As a culture generally made up of people of color, hip-hop often espouses similar politics: anti-consumerism, anti-capitalism, DIY, and anti-corporate greed, as well as emphasizing a total lifestyle change with a soundtrack, reading material and art all its own. If you don't believe me when I say the parallels are uncanny, pick up copies of Billy Wimsatt's *Bomb the Suburbs* and *No More Prisons*.

Secondly, use what you know. By actively questioning, which probably got you into punk in the first place, you have acquired the power to move past just being White. Whiteness means to passively accept privileges, oppressing others in the process. Be something else. Be an abolitionist, and don't be afraid to let other people know what you are.

To everyone else, when you see someone like me on the bus or in the grocery store, don't assume that she is "just going through a phase." Many of us understand deeply what it means to give up privileges by choosing to look the way we do, and we're doing it for that exact reason.

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## DEFINING...THE VIOLENCE, THE POWER

Every day, every moment of my life, I refuse to submit to patriarchy. I am willing to risk everything so as to live authentically, to speak my mind and take up my space. I have risked and endured the loss of family relationships, friendships, group support, romantic possibilities, financial stability, and social approval so as to live my life truly. I have endured complete and utter misery, intense feelings of isolation and abandonment, and major crises in self-confidence and self-worth as I have clashed with the people around me, with their expectations and demands of how I should behave. This commitment to an authentic life, regardless of the cost, embodies the core of my feminist identity and activism.

I write this essay as a women's emancipation\* activist, who believes that revolution is imperative and that it starts within each of us and our private lives. I draw from my own life's experiences of violence, and from my battles against this violence, in the many forms and degrees it has permeated my life. I draw from time spent observing women and men interacting; time spent experimenting with gender roles; and time spent directly challenging men on their behavior towards women. I draw from years of feminist conferences, marches, rallies, actions, and self-defense training and from years of speaking with women late into the night about how violence has affected us all.

Because of space constraints, I do not address how race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and religion further complicate the subject at hand. I do, however, want to acknowledge there are multiple issues of this vein which need to be addressed.

Throughout the essay, I refer to "males" and "men." In doing so, I address the patriarchal power structure and the behavior of the overwhelming majority of men in this society. I acknowledge and honor that there also exist many men who struggle alongside women in vigilantly fighting patriarchy.

*Violence against women begins with the unstated definition of men's space as encompassing women's space.*

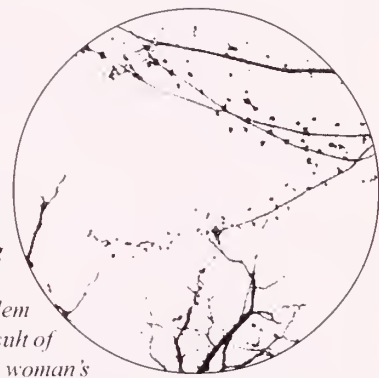
*Rape is not an isolated problem in and of itself. It is an extreme result of a man's sense of entitlement to a woman's body and energy. Its deadly dynamics exist in simple interactions which are accepted as normal and sanctioned by our society. To eliminate rape, we must eliminate its roots, which means a radical commitment to resistance of all its forms.*

*To truly eliminate these roots, our focus must not be on ending rape per se; rather, it must be on shifting our consciousness to a woman-loving and woman-centered orientation. As long as we are reacting to rape itself, we are perpetuating one of its most lethal roots - the male reference point for all of society. For as long as ending rape is our focus, our efforts will be a reaction to a male agenda, a male-imposed model of behavior.*

*Our commitment instead must be to a radical new concept: Women as a point of reference. Women as decision makers, without permission and without apology. Women as powerful individuals who take up space in the physical, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional worlds. Women as a force with whom all of society must contend. Women as a group from whom others must ask permission and to whom others must pay upon failing to do so.*

Men assault and batter countless numbers of women on a daily basis, in ways that our society does not yet acknowledge as being violent. Here are some examples from my life:

Constant experiences: I cannot go out of my home without at least



one male giving my body the up-down-assessment-of-inventory look, whistling at me, and/or making some variation of the "hey baby" comment. I cannot go to a dance club without at least one male grabbing or intentionally brushing a hand against my butt. I cannot show exuberant joy such as giving a victory yell, jumping in the air, or dancing in the street, without at least one male making some variation of the "hey baby" comment: whistling or making cat calls at me; telling me, "Shake it, girl, show me what you got," or otherwise approaching me. I cannot make daily transactions such as buying food without at least one male clerk/organizational representative calling me some variation of dear or sweetie. I cannot walk down the street with my head held high, actively looking at the world around me, looking into the eyes of the people I pass, without at least one male turning our connected gaze into ogling me. I cannot wear a body suit or swimsuit without most men I pass staring at my body.

**Frequent experiences:** When a male and I are walking towards each other down the sidewalk, we will crash unless I move to the side; and if we crash, he either will blame it on me or simply not apologize. When I am standing stationary and there is plenty of space around me, a male passing by will crash into my body and not apologize. When I am upset about something and not trying to hide it, a male stranger will say, "Come on, now, it can't be that bad," or "Cheer up and smile!" When I go jogging and pass a male jogger, he will say some variation of "Go girl! Keep it up!" When I am in conversation with a male, he will talk over me while I am speaking; and he will act impatient if I insist on continuing to speak without being interrupted. When I am lost and asking a male for directions, he will say, "I'll only give you directions because you're so cute." When I am interacting with a male I barely know, he will touch some part of my body—put his arm around me, hold my shoulder, touch my arm, and so on. When I am getting sexual with a male, he will not check with me before touching my private parts; and if I say I do not want him touching me there, he will pause a few minutes and then touch me there again.

How many of these examples would you consider to encompass assault? How many would you consider to have any degree of violence in them? To the contrary, how many of these examples would you consider to be positive experiences, complementary and flattering?

I find a degree of violence in all these examples. The common theme is that the males do not honor that I am a spirit independent from them, one with her own will, one with her own mass, one with her own agenda, one who is entitled to the body space around her. To the contrary, they treat me as if I am going through the world solely for their benefit—as if my body exists for their eyes; as if my joy exists for their consumption; as if my achievements exist for their ownership. The males furthermore expect that I will accept and respond positively to the constructs they force on me. Not only do they victimize me by their initial treatment; but if I do not bow to their will and respond in the way they desire, they become hostile, even physically threatening.

So what exactly is violence against women?

I believe the most clever and deadly forms of abuse are those in which the perpetrator brainwashes the victim into believing the abuse is not abuse and that any feelings to the contrary are indicative not of the insanity of the situation but rather of the insanity of the one questioning the situation. In these cases, the abuse itself is surrounded by a mythos legitimizing the abuse and proactively delegitimizing any resistance to it.

For example, our society bombards us with messages that if a man whistles at or ogles a woman (the abuse), it is a complement (the mythos surrounding the abuse); and that women who do not see it that way are frigid bitches (proactive delegitimization of resistance). Most of us want to be appreciated and do not want to be treated as evil outcasts of our society. Thus, **the mythos surrounding the abuse influences our per-**

**ception of it:** The behavior (whistling ogling) is "appreciation;" we want to be appreciated; so this behavior is what we want. The men doing it are "doing us a favor;" so we welcome it with gratitude, even seek it out. **The proactive delegitimization of resistance acts as a deterrent to our dissent:** We do not want to be treated as evil social outcasts; this behavior (resistance) is "evil" and will cause us to be outcasts; therefore we must not engage in it. We do not openly want to support this behavior in others, either; for we will be alienated for associating with the dissenters.

But are women not strong enough to resist and reject attempts to influence our perceptions? Do we not have the choice, will, and power to define life for ourselves? Ultimately, yes; but we must fight vigilantly and overcome great odds to do so. As women living within a patriarchal system, it is not only feasible but inevitable that at least to some extent we will be brainwashed into misperceiving or being numb to the violence against us. Patriarchal thinking is institutionalized in our culture and thus is everywhere—in our families, neighborhoods, schools, religious communities, in the media, and so on. There is no escape. When we are born, we are blank slates thrust into the context of this patriarchal model, and it envelops us. Most of us grow up only knowing this already-established and accepted order of our society, with its own set of definitions and points of reference. During the childhood years in which we form our initial identity, we lack the tools and awareness necessary to critique the set of assumptions we are given to define our experiences. We further are rewarded for compliance with the patriarchal model and punished for any instinctive resistance to it.

From infancy, girls are treated in ways that are disrespectful of our bodies, minds, and spirits. Our wills are bulldozed over as we are forced to contort our perceptions of reality so that they follow the patriarchal model: If we are sexually abused, we are told that it is our fault or that we are crazy. If we demand to be treated with dignity, we are dismissed as being "too" loud, overbearing, and unfeminine. The more we resist such teachings, the more we are told something is wrong with *us*, and the more we find ourselves at odds with or outcast from those closest to and around us. With so many people reinforcing the message that something is wrong with us, our perception, or females in general, we begin to doubt ourselves and believe them. Even the strongest among us rework our perceptions of reality, so as to avoid the intense agony of being in constant conflict with our environment.

As such, from birth, we systematically are indoctrinated with male definitions of women's nature, women's place in the world, and women's acceptable behavior. Not accidentally, these definitions are constructed to enable and support the violation of women. We are taught to take up space in the world only in a way that is safe for men, that supports the existing patriarchal power structure. We are taught that our space exists and is valid only as a subset of men's space. Any attempts we make to take up space for our own purposes, as a positive assertion and love of ourselves, is discouraged and punished. *So the primary violence against us is that we are robbed of our perception of reality and of our ability to define the constructs that exist within that reality. As an integral part of this violation, we are brainwashed and forced to embrace and act on behavior models that are structured to support continued violence against us.*

When men define the parameters of female behavior, and when that definition is entrenched in and enforced by the social structure permeating our daily lives, women are at the mercy of men. Men will define how much violence towards women is acceptable and in what context—namely, is rape in marriage "really" rape? if she was talking back to him was she "asking for it?" if she was attractive did she "deserve" to be stalked? and so on. As long as men define our space, we will walk through the world to some extent molding ourselves around



them: *Submission*—We completely submit our wills to them and spend our lives in service to them, in the hopes that we will be accepted and loved; or at least that they will find favor with us and not physically harm us. *Avoidance*—We will not wear what men define as “provocative” clothing in the hopes that then they will not rape us. *Resistance*—we verbally will tell off men when they grab our breasts, but we will not hit them; the assault already is “over,” after all. Besides, we might “exacerbate” the situation—i.e., if we resist, they will bring us back to “order” by beating us to a pulp.

As long as we accept and live within the context of the male construct of reality, no matter how women respond to the violence against us, we only will be *reacting* to a male agenda. For this reason, we will not have true power—the power to define who we are, the power to create social constructs, the power to name what is and is not acceptable behavior, and the power to enforce all of the above. Unless and until we look at, acknowledge, and *systematically destroy* the existing power structure, women will continue to be at the mercy of men; and men will continue abusing women. The more abuse, the stronger the system supporting the abuse—the stronger the patriarchal paradigm of power, in which men are invested. The stronger that system, the more abuse. And so on.

So how can women reach a point of autonomy while living in this world? How can we go about systematically destroying the existing power structure? Women and men must work vigilantly, separately and together, on several different fronts: First, we all must become conscious of this power structure and its influence in our lives. Second, we must take action to end our participation in and perpetration of it. Third, we must prevent other individuals and society at large from imposing and enforcing it. Because of space constraints, I will focus on a few of my ideas about and experiences with how we women can raise our consciousness of and end our participation in the power structure:

First, *question everything*: a) Who are we really? What part of ourselves is conditioned by society, and what part of ourselves is true? The process of defining ourselves is the first step to throwing off the shackles of patriarchy. The following activities have helped me discover who I am: Actively questioning my thoughts and behaviors; keeping a regular journal; practicing yoga; participating in activist groups; taking self-defense; becoming athletic; and attending healing-oriented workshops and meetings. b) What is really going on around us? Notice what people say to us and how they act. Is there an inconsistency? Are they saying rhetoric to manipulate us into certain behavior? Being able to identify the true dynamics at work in a situation enables us to identify abuse, to see through the mythos—the storyline—surrounding it.

Second, *resist and confront*: In what ways have we been brainwashed to tolerate violence against us and thereby support patriarchy? By speaking out against unacceptable behavior wherever possible, we can end our part in supporting the system that abuses women. *Unless and until we are able and willing to engage in effective physical combat, we will not have the luxury of saying “no” to men.* There is a risk that men physically will attack us when we do not accept whatever form of their violence against us, as a result of the patriarchal system of punishing women who resist. Accordingly, we need to have our bodily resources backing us up and ready to go. *When we have the power to back up our words, we have the freedom to say the words we want to say.* Impact\*\* is a unique, national full-contact self-defense program designed specifically for women. Unlike any other self-defense course, women learn to defend themselves in simulated assault scenarios in which they fight full-force through their padded “assailant.” By learning in an adrenalized state and realistic simulation, women gain an automatic fighting reflex that has saved the life of every woman who has chosen to fight when attacked by real assailants. Furthermore, women have made radical changes in their lives after taking the course, gaining emotional power

in all areas of their lives.

Third, *change expected female responses*: Fuck with the system. Change ordinary gender behavior and notice how it feels as we experiment. Stare at men’s bodies in the assessing-inventory ways they stare at ours. How does it feel to enact the male role? How do the men respond to being the object? Play with responses to stares, whistles, and the like. Try direct confrontation (walking up to him, glaring him down, and telling him to shut up), humor (parody—mimicking him in a mocking tone; making funny/weird faces and noises at him), embarrassment (yelling at the top of our lungs so everyone can hear, “Ew! How gross! You disgusting pervert! Get away from me!”), and physical response (punching him in the nose).

Fourth, *internalize new messages*: Identify the influences in our lives that reinforce patriarchy, and get rid of them as much as possible. Replace them with women-centered, woman-loving influences. Hang out at feminist book stores and browse through the many writings of courageous women who are fighting patriarchy. Join activist groups such as the Women’s Action Coalition or Riot Grrrls. Buy woman-loving posters and artwork, and hang them up all over our homes. Buy woman-centered music and play it to boost our spirits. Go to feminist conferences and make revolutionary friends.

Fifth, *focus on and celebrate the joys of life*: Live not only fighting the evil of the world, but rejoicing in the miracles inside ourselves and around us. Watch ducks in a pond, paint, go on a hike, dance on the beach, sing, take a bubble bath, or spend time with playful children. Find those things in life which give us pleasure and pursue them passionately. If our lives are spent only fighting the patriarchy, the system will have beaten us anyhow; because it will have succeeded in defining our lives for us.

By making the radical shift from a male-oriented to a female-oriented point of reference in our lives, we will destroy the foundations of patriarchy and the roots of the violence against us. Working as individuals, we nonetheless have certain limitations. We are living in a socio-political context, where we cannot control—namely, *prevent* the initial behavior of others. When I walk down the street, I as an individual cannot *prevent* a man from whistling at me. All I can do is make choices about how I will respond to his behavior. But there should not *be* anything to which I have to respond. His behavior should not occur *at all*. *In this sense, until patriarchy is completely dead, I as a woman will continue to be victimized, in a way that is outside my control.*

I have tried a wide range of responses to the various forms of male assault against me—from “ignoring” it to flipping a guy onto the pavement. I am not a victim. But I *am* victimized. Because until I have the *choice* to walk through life taking up my full space, *without facing the action or even threat of being assaulted in any form whatsoever*, all I can do is damage control: All I can do is minimize the impact of the abuse; for the abuse itself occurs at the moment that someone violates my will and invades my space.

*As long as the socio-political context of patriarchy exists, we will not be truly free:* Unless I am conscious about imposed definitions and constructs, I will be under their control. Unless I speak out about and chronicle patriarchal violations, I will be doing my part in allowing them to continue. Unless I confront and resist the various degrees of male violence against women, I will be at the mercy of men. The only way for me to be free from patriarchy is to see it, name it, and fight it. Yet in doing so, I lose precious time from living life the way I *want* to live it—dancing on the beach, creating music, playing with friends, loving and being loved. So the final step of freeing myself from the shackles of patriarchy is to recognize that as long as it exists, it will affect me one way or the other. I see it. By publicly chronicling the fact, I name it. By calling us into action, I fight it. For every activist step we take is an investment in a new future: Every day we are woman-centered, we shift the reference point

to ourselves. Every time we question assumptions, we help deconstruct and redefine them. Every time we speak out against patriarchy, we give it less of a hold on society. Every time we fight male violence against us, in whatever form, we deter men from being violent towards women. Every day, every minute, all around us in our personal lives, we can change the world. *Let's do it.*

#### Footnotes

\*women's emancipation activist: "freedom from oppressive restrictions imposed by sex; self-determination; and autonomy. Freedom from oppressive restrictions imposed by sex means freedom from biological and societal restrictions. Self-determination means being free to decide one's own destiny; being free to define one's social role; having the freedom to make decisions concerning one's body. Autonomy means earning one's own status, not being born into it or marrying it; it means financial independence; freedom to choose one's lifestyle and sexual preference - all of which implies a radical transformation of existing institutions, values, and theories." (Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, Oxford University Press, 1986)

\*\*Impact: For Impact Self Defense nationwide, call 1-800-77-FIGHT. I feel this program gives outstanding physical self-defense training, and I recommend it for this reason. I have found, however, that their emotional and philosophical components leave much to be

desired in the upper level classes and as part of staff. Specifically, I had the experience of being emotionally abused as a student in a multiple assailants class (LA Impact) and kicked off staff as an assistant (BAMM in SF), when I set boundaries within the group. I know at least two other individuals who had similar experiences, and I have heard of other stories, as well. So I feel they give fabulous training as far as teaching skills to use in the outside world but that they do not "walk the walk" when it comes to addressing dynamics within the program. All things considered, I feel training with them gives much more advantage than avoiding the program. I highly recommend it with the caveat that students need to be cautious to trust and go with their own intuition, not to just throw themselves into trusting the staff 100% from the word go.

Regarding Matt Thomas, the founder of Model Mugging, on which the Impact program is based: I had great experiences with him while training in his full-contact self-defense program. When training with him to shoot, however, I had a scary experience that made me never want to associate with him again, as he began to feel more like an assailant than an ally. I since have met one of the main players in a situation over ten years ago, where Matt (for legal reasons, I must say "allegedly") assaulted several women. Though I deeply honor Matt's contribution to women's self-defense, I strongly discourage any women from studying with him. ¶

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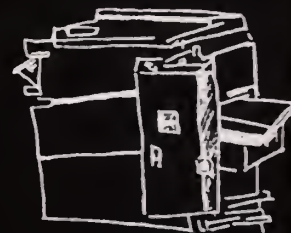
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## Underground Publishing Conference



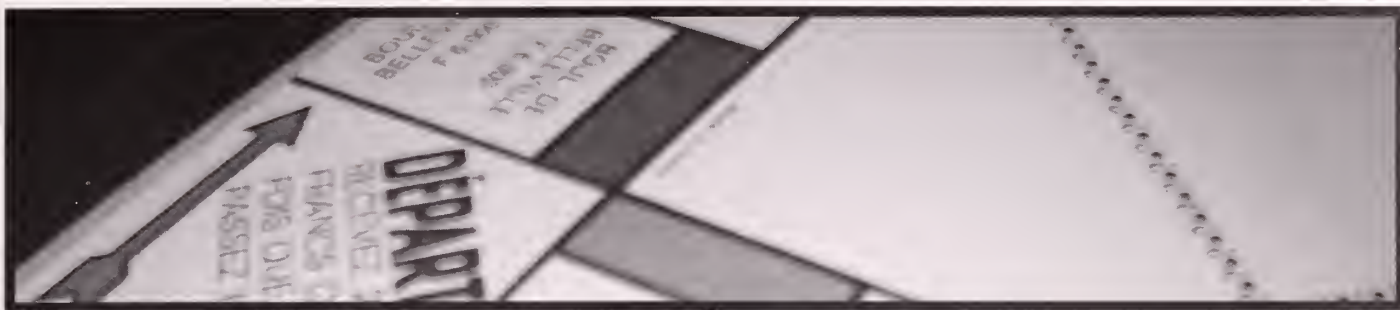
In June of 1999, the small town of Bowling Green, Ohio played host to a nationwide zine conference. Zine readers and writers came together to talk about the culture of independent publishing. Participants proposed and conducted panel discussions, workshops and mini-lectures covering the politics, economics, ethics and aesthetics of the zine world. Insights were shared. Friendships were forged.

We are planning to do the same thing in June, 2000, and the scope of the conference has been expanded to include an even wider range of underground publishing projects. Whether you're into zines, comics, independent newspapers, pamphlets, tracts, or books, there will be something of interest to you at the UPC. UPC is also taking suggestions for proposed panel discussions, workshops and speakers, so let us know what you would like to see at your conference. There will be a large hall reserved for tabling and just hanging out, so get in touch soon to reserve a space! Hope to hear from you soon and see you in June!

for more information,  
contact Jason at:  
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*Chuck Collins is Co-Director of United for a Fair Economy, the Boston-based national organization which addresses issues of economic inequality. Holly Sklar is a regular columnist for Z. Her articles also appear in USA Today, The Nation and other journals and newspapers. She is the author of Chaos or Community? Collins and Sklar are co-authors of Shifting Fortunes. Interview by David Barsamian. Boston, Massachusetts, September 16, 1999*

*Define what is wealth and how is it measured.*

HS: One thing we need to do is differentiate between wealth and income. In the U.S. there is tremendous inequality in both fields, but it's much worse in wealth. Wealth basically measures what you've accumulated and have over time. It's not just looking at, what's my income this year, what does my salary or paycheck reflect. It's saying, Let's look at everything I have, my income, my bank account, my stock holdings. What's the equity in my house, if I own a house? Also looking at my debts. You take your debts and you subtract it from your assets, things like houses, and if at the end of that math you've got something left over, that's your wealth. Many people, about one out of five households, have zero or negative net worth. They have in many cases much more debt than they have assets. Other people have very little real wealth. The difference is that wealth is for example what you borrow against. Many people finance their kids' college education based upon either savings they've been able to accumulate, wealth that has gone beyond what they've needed to spend day to day, out of home equity loans. People finance businesses out of the ability to take out a loan, which is often based on the assets that you can take that loan out against. Wealth is also what you leave to the next generation. You need something left over when you die in order to pass on wealth to the next generation, which in turn gives people a leg up for their own futures.

CC: People often talk about wages and income and they tend to know what each others' incomes are, but we don't know about wealth. Since the early 1960s, the number of households whose liabilities are greater than their assets has gone from about 8.5% to almost 20%.

*Why is that?*

CC: Underlying the wealth gap, since 1973 wages have pretty much stayed flat or fallen. So people are less able to save money and accumulate assets, get on the asset-building train. Building assets is a generational process. People pass assets on to their children. The fact that I am a homeowner has a lot to do with the fact that my parents were homeowners. Whether people get help from the government or from family, that's how people get on the asset-building train. One of the big reasons why there's such a big gap between blacks and Latinos and whites is because the generational transfer of wealth didn't happen. If you didn't get access to home ownership because of discriminatory lending, or even going back several generations because of slavery and Jim Crow laws, that means that there are families that didn't get on the asset-building train. The government has been very involved throughout our history in

helping people build assets. After World War II, billions and billions of dollars was spent to help essentially twenty percent of the population move from tenancy to home ownership, and most of those people were white because of the discriminatory nature of those programs. We need to now have another universal asset-building commitment to help this next generation also save money and be able to pass something on.

HS: We've had a kind of negative asset-building for a number of decades. The top 1 percent of American households have doubled their share of

the nation's wealth since the mid-1970s. This is the period, as I've said, where wages in real terms have fallen. This is a period in which the top one percent have grown their wealth so much that they now have 40 percent of all American household wealth, which is more than the 95 percent of households at the bottom. It's hard to talk about it at the bottom, looking at the 1 percent. What about the 95 percent up from the bottom? How can you call yourself a democracy and have a situation like that? It wasn't always like this. The top 1 percent have doubled their share of the wealth since the mid-1970s. We can see it in terms of corporate executives, for example.

*How do U.S. CEO salaries compare to other industrialized countries?*

CC: U.S. top managers, compared to their counterparts in Europe and Japan, are far and away the most overpaid on earth, by almost five to one and in some cases a ten to one ratio. If you look at Europe and Japan, the ratio is still closer to forty to one between the top and the average worker, which is where it was in 1980 in this country. The U.S. has continued to outpace that. CEOs earn 419 times what the average worker makes. Even looking at medium-sized companies, U.S. CEO pay is about 125 percent above the average in the other 22 biggest industrialized countries. There are two reasons for that. One is that European countries have stronger trade unions. Trade unions enforce a social contract that says, If the top is going to rise, the workers should share in that. In Japan and other countries, there's more of a cultural compact, that pay is not allowed to go so dramatically apart, partly because at the company level, top managers feel that that would actually undermine productivity. They would be ashamed to be paid so much more than their co-workers, and they recognize how that undermines the team. Here in the U.S., we have neither the clout of labor unions to say, Hold on, we want our share of the pie, nor do we have a cultural compact that says, Enough is enough.

HS: Some people say, What's the problem? If the corporations are doing really well, shouldn't the CEO make all this money? There are a couple of answers to that. Number one is, If the company is doing really well, it is not due to solely the CEO's efforts. Lots of times it is in spite of the CEO's efforts. It has to do with a contribution that's going on from workers and managers at every level of the company. Too often we've had a situation where the workers are being asked to take pay cuts, losing health benefits, losing pensions, being laid off in the thousands in some cases at the same time the CEO is getting millions and millions of dol-

lars. The other thing that's important to point out is that the *Wall Street Journal* and *Business Week* do annual surveys of CEO pay. I like to quote the *Wall Street Journal*: "Pay for performance? Forget it! These days, CEOs are assured of getting rich however the company does." You can add to that that they laugh all the way to the bank even when they're fired. You say, Ultimately they may pay the price because they're fired if the company does poorly. But in fact, they may walk out with, forget about golden parachutes, platinum parachutes these days.

*Talk more about what you call in Shifting Fortunes the serious consequences, not only for the economy, but for democracy and civic life of income inequality.*

CC: Some people still say, So what if there's this growing wealth gap, as long as more people are sharing in the wealth? We're saying that people are both not sharing in the gains of the last twenty years but even worse, that too much concentrated wealth is fundamentally a threat to our democracy, to our economy and to our culture. What I mean is that concentrated wealth is concentrated power. When the 1 percent of the population controls 40 percent of the wealth, and 10 percent of the population controls 70 percent of the wealth, that's enormous political power to write the rules of the economy on taxes, global trade policy and other issues that affect everyone. The reason it's a threat to our economy, and it's no coincidence in my mind, is that the last time wealth was this concentrated was in 1929, on the eve of the Depression. A number of economists have argued that too much inequality destabilizes the economy. People who are at the top end are speculating wildly, trying to get the highest returns. They are investing more in the financial paper sector, which has the potential to be a house of cards. At the bottom end, you have more and more people defaulting on loans, going deeper into debt and ultimately unable to purchase things. That will affect consumer demand in the economy. So too much inequality destabilizes the economy and fundamentally pollutes our democracy.


HS: Let's take one concrete example. You would think that in an economy that is growing in the richest country in the world, you wouldn't have a situation in which one out of five children is growing up in poverty. That should be seen as something that's intolerable. But the reality is that the people who are for the most part making the policies are doing them to service those who are giving them large campaign contributions. They don't tend to be low-income children or their parents. When you have a system that's directly tied to a bizarre combination of one person-one vote and one dollar-one vote, it fundamentally distorts even more than in many other countries how policies are made.

*One of the recurring themes of United for a Fair Economy seems to turn on this axis of fairness.*

CC: What we're seeing is a breaking down of equality of opportunity, such as any existed. More and more people are starting the running race of life five feet from the finish line, and a lot of people are starting the same race with ten-pound weights around their legs. We really don't have fundamental equality of opportunity. We're becoming more and more of a plutocracy. That's a word that really describes the U.S. at this particular moment in history, where the rule of money and the rule of the

wealthy is setting the rules and setting the tone for the society as a whole. HS: There is a growing conflict between the premises of democracy's promise of equality of opportunity and reality. The problem is, people can see through this, so it leads to anger and hostility in some cases and to self-blame in others. You have some people who feel like they're not getting ahead but everybody else is, this completely crazy idea that is sometimes put forward that everybody's getting rich. Many people are losing out. You didn't know ten years ago that you were going to rise

through the ranks of this particular corporation and then they were going to lay off 10,000 people and you're not going to be able to find another job because in that particular field people are only trying to hire workers in their twenties. This is something that's going on today, at the same time as there's low unemployment. There are literally many, many people who are qualified to work and can't find work in their fields. What else goes on is, people then blame other people. That has a very direct impact. The people who need to be working together to change the situation are divided from each other. So you have, for example, people in the middle class who feel the pressure that they're not doing as well as their parents did. They're being encouraged to look at people who are poorer than them and say it's their fault. They're dragging me down. They're climbing over me to the top. White folks are en-



**CEOs earn 419 times what the average worker makes. Even looking at medium-sized companies, U.S. CEO pay is about 125 percent above the average in the other 22 biggest industrialized countries.**

couraged to think there's reverse discrimination. We could spend a long time talking about how there's the myth of reverse discrimination, when there's still a lot of actual discrimination. They're encouraged to look at the bottom, not the top, when in fact, low- and middle-income people need to look together to why is it that the top 1 percent is getting so separated from everyone else in a lot of ways, or the top 5 percent? Why is there such a redistribution upward?

*Knight Ridder, a mainstream news organization, recently reported, "These seem in many ways to be the best of times for American workers, but as the nation marks the last Labor Day of the century, there is unrest in the air."*

CC: One thing is that there have been some really good surveys of younger workers. The growing number of young people coming into the workforce now are recognizing that they're entering a workforce where they have no job security, where they're probably not going to get any health insurance, where they're going to work and not be able to save any money. That's what's creating that unease. The rising tide's not lifting all boats. If you look at what's happening to younger workers, older workers and people of color, their experience of the economy is very different.

HS: People essentially can't keep up the pace they are at. I think they realize that. One of the things that has masked this real decline in inflation-adjusted wages over the last number of decades is that people have worked longer hours themselves and more families are dependent on two incomes, and some are even dependent on three and four incomes. You have multi-generation families living together for economic reasons. You often hear about teenagers working so they can buy the latest clothes at the Gap. The reality is, many teenagers are working so they have some money to go to college and to help pay the bills in the family.

CC: Another part of how wage stagnation is masked is not only by longer



work hours, but by people going deeper into debt. So people are picking up the slack for basically maintaining their standard of living by putting things on a credit card. We're not talking about luxury items. We're talking about a lot of people who have one major health or dental emergency in their family or miss a couple of weeks of work, or a long illness, all of a sudden they're going to the grocery store and charging their groceries.

HS: This is now the longest peacetime growth period in the economy, heading toward the longest period of growth ever. So the situation now in that period of economic growth is a negative savings rate. That's a real problem. Because what happens when the economy goes down? Where's the cushion? There isn't one. I'm in Boston. We have a very low unemployment rate officially, lower than the country as a whole. It's been like that for a number of years. I was just at the supermarket the other day. As I walked in, I noticed that there was a sign at the front door that says, Part-time positions wanted for everything, deli, cashiers, stockers. They advertised the pay, \$6.00 to \$6.50 an hour. This is Boston, one of the highest cost-of-living areas in the country, at a time of what a lot of people call full employment, which it is not. And they're proudly advertising jobs at \$6.00 and \$6.50 an hour. Certainly not high enough to support a family on. And while I was in the store they made an announcement. If you were interested in a job, come up to the service desk. I looked to see what was happening at the service desk, and there were 25 people lined up for these jobs. When you have a situation like that when the economy has been growing for so long, and people are still looking for jobs at that kind of low wages, then you have to ask yourself, then we're set up for a period that when the economy turns down, it's going to be that much worse.

*I'm interested in exploring further this issue of stress and quality of life. American workers are working longer and harder. According to a recent U.N. report, the average American worker works two weeks more a year than his counterpart in Japan, eight weeks more than in France, and ten weeks more than Germany.*

CC: U.S. workers are highly productive, but they are among the most overworked in the industrialized countries. That decline in leisure time and that sense of overwork directly undercuts how much people can be involved with their children's education, with community institutions that affect our lives. This is a vicious cycle. As inequality grows and more people are on this treadmill of working longer hours, all of a sudden they can't participate in the institutions to protect their interests. Then the rules of the economy are changed and they're not participating and inequality grows.

HS: What's interesting also about that is, many of the people who are setting economic or corporate policy are disconnected from reality. Most of the people who are in a position of making policy themselves have much more than nine or ten days of vacation a year. They have flexibility. If their kid gets sick, they know that they're not going to get fired from their job. If they want to rearrange their schedule for a family emergency, they know they have the ability to do that. Often times the well off and privileged don't even think about how a lot of people get by day to day. Many people are working under terrible conditions, the kind of conditions that were the reasons in the past for the prevention of child labor, the eight-hour day and some of the labor law advances that were made. It's time for a real look at not people giving more and more up, but coming together to join unions and organize politically so that policies can improve. Workers now are struggling just to hold onto what they have, like two weeks vacation, and not have it cut to one week. Or the idea that there are fewer and fewer people who are working for any kind of health benefits. Or if they have them, an increasing proportion have to pay a large out-of-pocket share themselves and have to pay if they want to include other family members in those plans. So you might say, Oh, it's a job with health benefits, but they're really different health benefits than the previous generation had on the job. And you can forget

about things like pensions.

*What accounts for these outcomes?*

CC: The growing income and wealth inequality is not a function of sunspots or some force out of our control but is the result of several decades in changes in the rules that govern the economy, rules that govern who pays taxes, who benefits from global trade agreements, whether the minimum wage is allowed to increase or not, whether people have the right to join unions and how bureaucratic that process is. Those are actual rules. So the good news is, humans actually have some say over this. If you went out and asked many traditional conservative economists, Why is inequality growing? there is a growing consensus about this. People don't quibble about the facts. They would say, It's really a function of technological change. Or it's globalization. It's outside of our control. The reality is, we the people can control the nature of how globalization occurs, whether free trade agreements lift up wages in the U.S. or push them down. Think about it in terms of rules. There's also been a power shift. The institutions that represent global corporations, big donors, have gained in clout, whereas institutions that represent workers and ordinary people, trade unions, have lost clout. That power shift explains why the rule changes seem to always be benefiting large asset-owners and corporations at the expense of wage earners. If you go down the list, what's happened to tax policy? In the last 20 years, asset owners have gotten enormous tax breaks. Wage earners haven't shared in the tax-cutting, loophole-building efforts of Congress. Global trade treaties, good for asset owners, investors and large corporations. Not good if you work for wages. All the way down the list. It's what two *Business Week* reporters, Ann Colamaska and Bill Coleman, wrote, called "The Triumph of Capital and the Betrayal of Work."

*Let me take the stance of someone from the American Enterprise Institute. Isn't it perfectly logical and rational that those who have wealth and power would seek to protect and enhance their position, influence legislation, lobby the government and give to both political parties?*

HS: It is perfectly logical, and in fact, they do. Those in powerful positions get together to work to increase their own power and profits and to influence government policy to benefit them. But it's often done under the pretense as if this is what the national interest is. This is one of the things that really hurts us. It's done as if it's the invisible hand in the market, or it's in the national interest, things like NAFTA or the World Trade Organization. It will help us all grow. The most powerful forces in the country, who represent a minority of interests, pretend that they represent the whole national interest. But trade unions or organizations of women or low-income people, when they organize in their own interest, that's called "special interests." So we have corporate forces purporting to be the national interest, and then there's all the others who are special interests. People need to recognize that they have to organize in some way or another at whatever level they find appropriate. People need to say, Yes, I can have influence over these different institutions and yes, I need to come together with other people to have influence. That's exactly what the people who do have influence are doing. It's just that it's often not seen that way.

*But isn't this a revolving door kind of dilemma that most people would find themselves in? You've described the amount of stress that workers are under, the two jobs, the three jobs, the 60-hour weeks. Where are they going to find the time to engage in a civic life?*

HS: Sometimes you have to make a priority where you can't imagine how you're going to find the time. You just have to do it. You think you're totally stressed out and then your child gets sick. You have to find a way to deal with that. Let me give you an example. There's an organization called the Street Neighborhood Initiative in the lowest-in-

come area of Boston, straddling the Dorchester-Roxbury neighborhoods. It's historically a very high unemployment area. It's predominantly people of color, some whites. The organization itself is multiracial. They came together years ago, during the 1980s. These are people who are very stressed out in their lives, have to work very hard, often two or three jobs. They said, The situation here is intolerable, and we're going to come together to change it. This is a neighborhood that had undergone years of disinvestment, where the government was allowing people to trash the neighborhood, literally dump illegal garbage there from other parts of town. It was like a joke. You'd have construction going on in one part of Boston to gentrify housing and build very expensive condos, and then to save a buck the contractor would come to Roxbury and find a vacant lot and dump the construction debris there. The people in the neighborhood would get blamed for being messy. No transit services, no fire department services. People came together and worked very hard and have made a real difference in the lives of their community. They came up with a plan to rebuild their community, and year by year they've been putting it into effect. It's a perfect situation where people have been written off as powerless and often thought of themselves as powerless because they've gotten knocked in the head so many times when they tried to do something and finally found a way to come together and make a real change.

CC: People need to join organizations that are going to be a countervailing power to these large corporations. That's one of the big reasons that inequality has grown in the postwar years. In 1950, 35 percent of U.S. workers were in trade unions. Today it's about 14 percent. That's a dramatic loss in clout of an institution that said, What about workers? What we're starting to see, which I think is a good sign, is that more and more people are saying, We should organize a union. Everybody from the American Medical Association to IBM pensioners saying, We need a little bit more clout in the political process to advance the interests of ordinary working people.

*What kind of initiatives has United for a Fair Economy proposed to change the slices of the economic pie?*

CC: We coordinate something called the Campaign to Close the Wage Gap, which is a national effort to support raising the minimum wage, passing a federal living wage, which would require all federal government contractors to pay their employees \$8 an hour, and eliminate the deductibility of excessive compensations. Big corporations right now deduct these big CEO paychecks from their taxes. We're supporting a package that would say, Any salary over 25 times the lowest-paid worker in the company is no longer deductible. There are a lot of interesting signs of hope and signs of movement formation. People are beginning to address this. In about 120 municipalities and counties around the country there are living wage movements that have passed in the case of about 33 communities, living wage ordinances requiring their city or county to impose in their contracts with companies to pay a living wage to their workers. That is an almost-below-the-radar-screen social phenomenon that shows that we're in an early stage of an emerging fair economy movement. We also are very involved on tax policy issues, mostly ensuring that of new tax policies don't dramatically favor wealthy people and provide nothing in the way of tax support or tax benefits for lower- and middle-income households. And in the coming two years we're going to be focusing a lot on this issue of wealth inequality and what kinds of initiatives can both address the fact that a growing number of households need to build more assets and also address the

overconcentration of asset power at the top end of the ladder.

HS: There are certainly other kinds of things we can do. It didn't used to be the expectation that every child would get a high school education. Then it became the norm that there would be publicly financed high school education. Again, in other countries it's the norm that public education is financed from preschool all the way through college and even in some cases adult education. Here we have the separation between high school and college. That needs to end. This is a country where a college degree is increasingly necessary. In some cases it's not sufficient, but it's necessary for a decent living. That should be something that's a right, a right to go to college, not something that depends upon either your parents being able to pay for it or, as is often the case, your own ability to take on tens of thousands and even in some cases hundreds of thousands of dollars of debt.



**People need to say, Yes, I can have influence over these different institutions and yes, I need to come together with other people to have influence. That's exactly what the people who do have influence are doing. It's just not seen that way.**

*Let me ask you about those changes that you're proposing. A critic might say, They sound well-intentioned, but they're really cosmetic. How would you respond?*

CC: I'd say that a lot of these problems are democracy problems. There are problems in terms of the winners and losers in the economy. If ordinary working people have more power in this country, that is a fundamental change. That means that not only today but on an on-going basis people will have a stake. I think a lot of people don't have a blueprint or vision of what a fair economy looks like. But we know what some of those pieces are. People who work should not be in poverty. The benefits of hard work and production shouldn't go only to the top earners. I would say that one of the things we need to do is look more at the lessons of other countries and the lessons

from the past and to have more of a stakeholder economy, where not just owners of capital, not just investors are the big winners, but that consumers have a claim, workers have a claim, communities have a claim, we all contribute to creating healthy and wealthy communities.

HS: If a person could expect to work at a minimum wage that would keep them above the poverty line, that would make a tremendous difference to a lot of people's lives. If you had a situation in which you did all kinds of things that allowed people to build wealth, it would have a very big impact on their current situation and on future generations. It would be cumulative, something that could grow into the future. If you made college education available to all people, that would be a tremendous difference. We referred to health care, but obviously if you have a situation in which like many other countries health care was not connected to your job and whether you happened to have health care on the job but rather every person was assured some form of health insurance, then you would have people never be in that situation where they have a health crisis in their family and their savings account was literally wiped out, where they lost their job because they had to stay home to take care of the person.

There are all kinds of things that could be done that have serious and real and strong and positive impacts on people. The one really important thing to remember is change is always hard. Change has always been hard. There is nothing easy about all that was done to eliminate much of the child labor in this country. It wasn't easy to win the right to an eight-hour day or the minimum wage. We have hard work to do. But what you can't do is put it off and say, Unless I win the whole package I'm not going to fight for a piece of it. Or unless I think I'm going to win the whole package I'm not going to fight for a piece of it.

I think it's a combination of two things that are always most successful. You have a vision in which you say, Here's some fundamental



changes we really need, a very positive vision of being able to make those changes. So you think big about a bill of economic rights, for example, and all the elements that go into that, the right to a job at a living wage, universal health care and so on. But you don't wait until you can get the whole package. You begin to fight for pieces of it because in fact it's only in being successful in winning this piece and then that piece that you get toward the whole package and more and more people feel like they see something that's real and that has an impact. Some people join because of the big vision and others start to work because. Wow, they made a difference in my neighborhood. Working together we made a difference in our neighborhood and you really can make a difference in the city as a whole. Maybe there really is something to this process of, for example, maybe I'll run for city office. Maybe I'll be the person that's going to implement the real changes. There's all kinds of ways in which you need to both think big but work very much for these piecemeal things that are going to add up to the inspiration and to the foundation for the big picture.

CC: If we go back to, How did we get into this mess? There's been a power shift, and the rules governing the economy have been changed. So that leaves a lot of opportunities for activity. You could join power building organizations like unions, religious congregations, or United for a Fair Economy. Then within that you can get involved with a myriad number of campaigns. Another thing I would add to the list is we need to be more literate about what's happening in the economy and understand the relationship between these rules that get written in both the national and even at the global level now and how that affects our day-to-day quality of life. I think that's somewhat of a challenge. Each of us learning more, reading, subscribing to magazines and journals, listening to Alternative Radio, listening to business radio, just to sort of understand more what the dynamic is. There are a lot of arenas for action. If we're individuals on our own and we're not part of a group, and a group could be four people in your religious congregation who get together and say, What can we do together? then we're not going to be able to tackle this because we're up against very, very big and powerful institutions that have a lot of money. But if you go back and look at any social movement, at early stages things looked fragmented, people didn't feel like what they did made a difference. But slowly the momentum picks up. Individual action does make a difference. ¶

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# Panic Rules!

A review by Casey Boland

Let's get one thing nice and sparkling clear: I know about as much of economics as George Bush Jr. knows about foreign dignitaries. Apes schooled in consumer math could do a better job balancing my checkbook. A five-year old armed with a Wall Street Journal and a laptop could tell you more about stocks. It is those economically-knowledge challenged individuals like myself whom Robin Hahnel aims his pen at in his new book, *Panic Rules! Everything You Need to Know About the Global Economy* (South End Press, October 1999).

Hahnel's new book couldn't hit the bookstore shelves at a more appropriate time. Casual consumers of mainstream media are bombarded with newscasters and reporters singing the praises of the new global market. You'd think they were working for the IMF, considering the standard chorus sung in unison among the media that the only way for America to stay Number One is for its businesses to find the cheapest labor possible in foreign lands and ram the ideology and policies of "free trade" down the throats of those developing countries. Hahnel seeks to throw a sour note into the praise showered upon the globetrotting tendencies of transnational corporations. Perhaps the majority of the public wouldn't question the internationalization of the economy and the methods utilized to pave the way for the big, lumbering companies out to transport their goods to every corner of the globe, were it not for three little letters: WTO. *Panic Rules!* arrived on the eve of the explosive mixture of 50,000 protestors and the representatives at the ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization in Seattle November 29 to December 3. For those wanting the real skinny on why what went down went down, *Panic Rules!* is the perfect place to start.

Hahnel seeks to decipher the complicated jargon of economic-speak and translate it into something the layperson can understand. But it's also the bigger picture he's trying to describe. What's the deal with the boom-and-bust thing? Why does the newspaper tell me we have a booming economy when I make barely enough to pay the rent? What the hell was up with the Asian economic crisis? What on earth's an IMF??? All this and much more is dissected and discussed within the book's 125 pages.

## Boom is a Bust For Most

Hahnel wastes no time in getting right to the heart of the matter: the global economy is a game where the investors win and the rest lose. As for the boom-and-bust tenet of capitalism, he writes "Neither part of the manic-depressive, boom-and-bust cycle of capitalism is 'healthy.'" Throughout the first chapter, Hahnel reveals the real-world consequences for the supposed "booming economy" that often go neglected by the uproarious media-big business cheerleaders. Though the economy has indeed grown since the '70s, the average income of most people shrunk. It doesn't take a Milton Friedman to realize that someone reaps the rewards of this growth and as Hahnel illustrates, it ain't your average Joe and Joanne. "The share of total wealth owned by the top one percent almost doubled between 1976 and 1992." The much lauded boom—that miracle of the market that makes us wealthy, well-fed Americans with a disposable income burning a hole in our pockets—is in fact an illusion. Most of us aren't rich, few are well fed and most don't have money to burn on the pyre of economic excess.

So how can the government and its media mouthpiece get away with trumpeting the glory of an economy that really gores the majority of people, you must ask? Hahnel serves up several answers. Consider the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). I won't pretend to know a whole hell of a lot about GDP and its significance, yet Hahnel knows a thing or two about the subject. A nation's wealth is measured by GDP, always in comparison with other nations. Hahnel believes the GDP is a flawed method for determining economic activity, since it fails to consider environmental degradation and other negatively affected areas. But even when we



# Green Consumerism

I was in one of the new health food supermarkets today—the kind where my sister complains about the smell. If you are used to the ammonia and Windex smell of corporate chain supermarkets, the fresh smell of organic fruit and vegetables can confuse your sense of routine and throw the comfort of normal shopping off-balance. I imagine her at my side, straying away from unbagged and unwaxed apples. I hear the complaints about dirt and how unsanitary the food is. I laugh to myself about the conversation happening in my head. The potatoes came out of the ground, of course they smell like soil, what do you expect? I defend the market to a degree because the labels claim “locally grown” or “organic.” But I only defend it in comparison to the regular supermarket where almost everything is grown on the other side of the Earth at horrible wages and awful environmental costs, and shipped here over seas and mountains on ships and trucks that exhale toxic fumes into the air we breathe. But this store isn’t much better. It’s just that no one is taking into account the new markets being created and the waste that exists due to the same style of over-production.

This new supermarket is uncomfortable from the first step inside where the busy cashiers in their identical uniforms greet me over their shoulders with a quick “Welcome to Whole Foods Market.” I’m thrown off guard and I don’t remember replying. They’re probably used to that, and probably don’t even notice my response or lack of it. Their greeting is just a reaction to the sound of the electronic doors opening and closing behind them and the slight breeze that comes through—reminding them that they’re missing a beautiful day or that they forgot their sweatshirt. Either way, I grab a basket and start my way through the maze-like aisles walled off by “smart-buys” and a cardboard cutout of a smiling white guy with overalls and clean hands in the middle of a spinach field. The turnips happen to be from the farm I work on occasionally. I probably picked some of them myself. And now they’re here being sold back to me. The name of the farm is drawn nicely above a painting of a clean older man. I’d never seen him out there in the fields, just the usual punks who live out there in tents and buses. He lacked the homemade tattoos or homemade haircut associated with farm laborers. He wasn’t even tan.

I don’t actually think I can fill up that basket or had even planned on getting much more than a few veggies and some soy milk, but I nearly tripped over it at the front door. A great reminder that my hands can’t hold all I’m expected to buy. It was either that basket or those huge shopping carts people always fill so well. I couldn’t imagine doing so.

I always forget what I came for when I walk through those doors or roam the colorful and mile-high aisles of boxed, bagged and canned soup, chips and cereal. There’s weird and blinking boxes printing out coupons for things they think I need. I fight the urge to rip the boxes off the shelves better than I do the urge to check out what they say. One of them is a dollar off coupon for a rice and bean mix in a box. Another random product I never needed before; but now that it’s right there in my hand smiling at me I consider its usefulness. Eventually I pass it up. I couldn’t imagine ever needing more than two percent of what’s here but it all stares down at me with such confidence. It’s stubborn and cocky and I’m just tired of listening. It feels like a carnival ride or a fast river pulling me along. The route is not my choice and it soon feels that neither are the

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do cast our beady eyes on GDP figures for the U.S., we discover an interesting trend. Since 1973, the world has been in the “neoliberal era,” meaning, the barriers on the flow of capital across the globe have been knocked down. Prior to ‘73, the economies of the world bowed to agreements and institutions conceived during an orgy of statesmen at a conference in Bretton Woods, NH just after World War II. The offspring of the heated moment were the IMF, the World Bank and GATT. Hahnel’s point with comparing both eras is this: the Bretton era is considered by big-time economists as the Golden Age of Capitalism. In the era since, the GDP of the United States has declined.

What does all of this mean for everyday people, those individuals not behind closed doors or on the cell phone with their broker? More Americans fear for their financial futures than at any other time since that colossal liquidation period of wealth and security, the Great Depression. Layoffs multiply and downsizing is a household word, as businesses move their factories overseas to exploit regular people of another color. As Hahnel puts it: “For every wealthy beneficiary of rising stock prices, rising profit shares, and rising high-end salaries, there were 10 victims of declining real wages, decreased job security, and lost benefits.” Definitely not the Golden Era.

## Why Some Asian Tigers Don’t Roar

Throughout 1997, you couldn’t pick up a newspaper or surf the TV without bumping into some report on the Asian economic miracle. Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, South Korea, Malaysia—these were among the Asian tigers U.S. media and investors pointed to with glee as being the epitomes of globalization. See, they said, this proves that globalization does bring wealth to the world. This reaffirmed the magic of the market, the power of the invisible hand. And then those castles made of sand were washed away by the tumultuous sea of the global economy.

Income plummeted as unemployment soared. The value of currencies sunk quicker than the hearts of those investing in Asian markets. Food prices skyrocketed and government social spending retracted to withstand the harsh costs of the IMF bailout (more on that soon to come). Why did the Asian miracle suddenly become the Asian crisis? Hahnel deftly cuts through the crap shat upon the world by the asses who caused the crisis—the investors and those in the upper echelons of global corporations. The international credit system is to blame, says Hahnel. “International investment flooded into East Asia in the 1980s and 1990s because East Asia was a more profitable place to invest... and there was a sea of global wealth



# Is Still Consumerism.

by Robert Augman

random things I end up piling on the moving countertop when I finally reach the front of the line.

The woman in line at the register next to me is pulling what seems to be an endless amount of things from her bottomless cart as her daughter tries to help. The woman is impatient and tired. It's easy to tell from the look on her face. The store is probably the last place she wants to be and the long line has got to be killing her. It's an insult to hold us here waiting for some other overworked and unskilled laborer to scan these bags and boxes while our stomachs growl madly for filling. How nice it would be to skip all of this. But no one ever considers that option. A reality where food is free, work is fulfilling, health is great and time is well spent is on everyone's mind, but on no one's drawing board. It's a daydream; a fantasy world of needs being met sufficiently. But the possibility is quite real. I've eaten from community gardens and walked away from "free stores" with a jacket in the middle of winter. No demanding proof of labor, just ordinary people restructuring the way goods and services are used; free everything. I work occasionally with different free-food and clothing redistribution services. My reward comes from playing an essential role in a cooperatively-structured society, one that declares basic necessities to be a right, not a privilege.

Kids are great to watch because even when their exhaustion comes it's quite different than the exhaustion you get from doing other peoples' work all day. The kids fall asleep comfortably with the day well spent where adults fall asleep unfulfilled and frustrated. Even still, no matter how bored and dead their parents might be, it's exactly the role their children want to grow up into.

The woman scoots up for the girl to push her mini-cart closer to the register and start unloading. It doesn't completely shock me to see that gimmick here. The health food store models itself entirely after the supermarket across the street. She unloads colorful boxes of sugar cereal, cookies, and ice cream and the boss laughs all the way to the bank as he watches the youngest of children become the new consumers. Just like the Happy Meal, the mini-carts are not a sneaky tactic. It's obvious where marketers are going with this one. And the proof hangs on a plastic flag at the top of its post bolted to the back of the cart that reads "customer in training." "Not only do companies succeed in persuading children to buy particular products, they also imbue children with the values of commercialism," writes Jacobson and Mazur in *Marketing Madness*. And "Commercialism" as defined by The Center for the Study of Commercialism means "Ubiquitous product marketing that leads to a preoccupation with individual consumption to the detriment of oneself and society." That detriment of the self is quite obvious from the fancy shoes and empty heads of children to the fancy cars and selfish greed of adults and the businesses and governments they run.

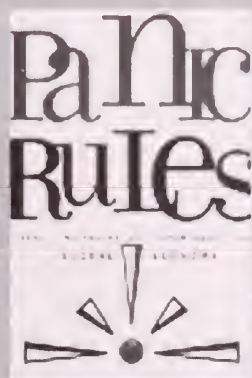
The prices are absurd, more absurd than the prices the normal supermarket demands. They beep out loud and dance across the screen blinking obnoxiously in my face as the cashier scans them through. It reminds me where I am, a market for the middle-class. Maybe their costs are higher or they just know we're willing to throw down more money on those grossly exaggerated claims of environmentally sound products. It was once an assumption of mine that health food

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looking for dry land. Then, when investments financed by international capital became less profitable than all had come to expect, investors took flight, and chickens came home to roost in a highly leveraged global credit system." He points the finger (and raises a middle one at) "liquid global wealth," international finance. It's quickly taking over what he calls the "real economy." Under such a system, a crisis is always just around the corner.

And Hahnel isn't content to only talk about the problem in intangible terms of finance and markets. He describes the grim reality for the people who must endure the fallout of those ailing Asian economies. And he also discusses conditions during the so-called miracle days. While an elite of Asian businessmen relished in the inundation of international capital, "what the lucky ordinary East Asians had gained from their economic 'miracle' was a low-paying job in perhaps a modern factory, but more likely a dangerous sweatshop, instead of underemployment as a seasonal laborer or sharecropper in an unproductive agricultural sector."



## IMFed

If one organization symbolizes all that is evil and wrong in the global economy, Hahnel believes it to be the IMF. The International Monetary Fund gives loans to countries- massive amounts usually billions of dollars. But their loan doesn't come as benignly as one your bank may give you to pay for a car or school. IMF loans come with strings attached- strings that can strangle thousands to death. Hahnel states that the IMF is seen as the "manager" of the international credit economy, though the system usually functions as if it were managed by nothing. And the way it tries to manage is by giving loans in return for "structural adjustments." These normally include privatization, trade liberalization, fiscal austerity and monetary austerity. In plain English, the IMF wants countries it gives money to, to cut public spending and shift manufacturing towards exporting. The priority becomes making one's nation appealing to investors, not directing resources towards enriching the lives of the citizenry. The notion of benefits "trickling down" from the top is, Hahnel would agree, an economic theory as crazy as the American actor-turned-president who made it famous.





stores held an environmental conscience, which also encompassed fair working conditions, and an intentional lack of misleading or persuasive advertising. But that's really only how I justify my spending at these awful places. "With causes for sale, people who once felt guilty for buying too much now risk a bad conscience for buying too little," says newspaper columnist Colman McCarthy. The "green consumer's" concern for the environment is marketed and sold back to him/her as reusable coffee filters or canvas bags to hold their new groceries in. "The market is presented as the savior of the environment. Environmental concern is commodified and transformed into ideological support for capitalism. Instead of raising awareness of the causes of the ecological crisis, green consumerism mystifies them. The solution is presented as an individual act rather than as the collective action of individuals struggling for social change," notes Andrew Watson in "From Green to Red." Our lives remain secluded and separate from each other. "Greenpeace" stickers on car bumpers ride off in different directions into sprawling, overdeveloped suburbs. I watch them clog the roads with their deathmobiles pumping Exxon or whoever else's newest "clean" gasoline into the air as I unlock my bike. Now that the gasoline companies have built screens over their factories' smoke stacks so birds can't fly in and get killed, drivers feel more at ease with the extra miles they drive. Where community gardens, parks, and green spaces could be springing up we salute the new health food store when it comes to town. But the store's place in the market is a symbol of the capitalist model, where only differences in ingredients and slight differences in packaging materials exist. Green consumerism functions as normal consumerism by introducing new markets, over-producing, and creating extreme amounts of waste.

Capitalism, even a green capitalism, cannot co-exist with a free and healthy environment. Green consumerism has taught us a familiar lesson: instead of resisting commodification of our lives and developing sustainable and ecological ways of living, we accept every good and service, even the most basic necessities, as the capitalist product. No matter if we're buying our food at the health food store or the corporate chain supermarket, we're still supporting the standardized way in which one of the fundamental human needs, food, goes from the Earth to us. The structure goes unchanged. And the concerns of those who shop at these stores get covered in the wet paint that capitalism has coated the new market with. Full support for capitalism to continue pumping out "new and improved" green products is sung by those who once found rotten holes in the market-system. The chorus of the discontented is swayed and swooned and the capitalist structure goes, once again, unchallenged. They're back and ready to spend more at their new store than those across the street will. They're ready to prove that they're right, and they'll do it with dollars. They're passionate and determined that their big bucks will solve the problem. They haven't won the war but they think they've won the battle.

If we're really determined to make the environment one of our priorities, the idea of it as something separate from ourselves and that we can continue to carelessly drain from it as we please, must cease. The environment must be acknowledged for the life force it is, and that our existence depends on it. If we want to improve our livelihood our food must no longer be used as leverage or trade. It must be free to all. Our lives depend on the way we live them. The revolution will not be sold to us. It will be taken.

*A few resources on similar subjects: Marketing Madness by Michael F. Jacobson and Laurie Ann Mazur; From Green to Red by Andrew Watson; Communities Magazine; Auto-Free Times Magazine; Adbusters Magazine; Z Magazine; And the constant battle of community gardens in New York City. ☿*

As Hahnel points out, countries are not forced to take IMF medicine. But they usually have no choice- if you need money, you'll do whatever is necessary to get it. Unfortunately it is the common people of recipient nations that choke on the medicine and suffer the worst side effects. *Panic Rules!* includes copious examples of IMF policy failures, such as the case of the Asian Tigers. Currencies in the region were not stabilized and depression throughout the area did not subside. Worse, it threatened to drag other economies down. The great fear among those Americans paying attention to the economic crises in Asia and elsewhere- that the "contagion" may harm the U.S. economy- is a distinct possibility.

Hahnel packs a whopping punch into the typical mainstream economic explanations and praises of the market. He builds his assertions on a steady foundation of copious examples and statistics. And he writes in a conversational manner- most of the time. Some sections find Hahnel speaking in esoteric, foreign economic tongues that defied my understanding. Specifically, Chapter 2 throws at you complex terminology and economic precepts that I found bewildering. The "negative externalities" and "lobins" and "efficiency gains" were a bit dizzying for my econom-

ics-lacking background. The appendixes at the book's conclusion spit out even more brain-splitting mathematical equations and terms that flew miles over my head.

Still, *Panic Rules!* gives the left what it needs most in these times of near-market supremacy: an educated radical critique of the predatory forms of capitalism by a well-seasoned economist. The left needs all the smarts it can get and in Hahnel, it has a formidable ally. The book scores more points for offering tangible solutions to the ills it analyzes. Hahnel devotes those difficult-to-wade-through last pages to concepts and equations that seek to ameliorate the destructive tendencies of globalization. Yes, hardcore anarchists and Marxists beware- Hahnel isn't prescribing the overthrow of capitalism. In fact, he believes it can function in a way to truly benefit everyone. While not an all-out tome on the possibilities for a reformed capitalist economic system, Hahnel focuses on exactly how global trade could be an equal trade for all parties involved. Sounds like an idea about as plausible as Nike paying workers in its Viet Nam factories more than a dollar an hour. But with more critiques as intelligent and as insightful as *Panic Rules!*, we could someday be seeing those Vietnamese being able to afford the products they make. ☿



# the complicated business of music

## ASCAP, SESAC, and SOCAN

The deeper you get into the music business, the more it gets to be about business (yawn) and the less about music (which is presumably what's really interesting.)

But it's true that there's money involved in the system, and it might as well be going into the hands of people who have something to do with its creation through their labor in creative areas, rather than people who get it because the bureaucracies of the system favor them.

To be more specific, I'm talking about money made in the area of publishing royalties.

Most independent rock bands write their own songs. If the band records that song, and that recording is played on, for instance, a college radio station, or rather, a bunch of college stations, often enough to fall into a sample survey, there is money due to be paid to the writer of the song.

BMI and ASCAP, and the much smaller SESAC, are what is known as performing rights organizations. Businesses that use music pay money to these organizations, which are supposed to turn around and pay it to writers and publishers of songs.

So far, so good. It's been shown that bands can and do get money from radio airplay. But what about live performances, and what about when recorded music is played in clubs or other businesses? The venues have to pay a fee to the performing rights organizations, but it appears that based on current rules, money is distributed based on factors like commercial (not college) radio airplay and to headliners of top-grossing tours. That sounds like the writers of commercial hit songs and bands who play arenas are getting money that should be going to bands that play in small venues. Witness these quotes from BMI's website:

"We... determine semi-annually which musical acts were among the 200 top-grossing tours. A royalty payment is calculated for each BMI-licensed work used in the headliner's act in each of these top musical tour set lists."

<http://www.bmi.com/about/library/brochures/includes/rlymix.inc>

"BMI also licenses non-broadcast general music users, such as night-clubs, discos, hotels, bars, restaurants and other venues. While it is virtually impossible to log and make a separate distribution for such performances, they are accounted for by BMI's basic premise that the material used in such venues reflects the songs currently being performed on commercial broadcasting stations. Therefore, royalties collected from general music users are distributed on the basis of performances on commercial radio and television stations."

<http://www.bmi.com/about/library/brochures/performance.asp>

And from ASCAP:

"On live-concert performances: Since 1993, the society has conducted a 100% census live-performance survey of all songs performed in the 100 top-grossing concert tours, as well as selected other major live-performance venues. ASCAP also conducts a census of symphonic concerts and recitals."

<http://www.ascap.com/about/essentials.html>

King Coffey of the Butthole Surfers observes, "The ASCAP/BMI scheme makes sense for clubs that offer mainly cover bands. This was the norm in the '50s and that was probably when these policies were last revised. I'd think a two tier system would make more sense for performance fees to charged to smaller clubs — one for clubs that feature mostly covered material and another one for clubs offering primarily original material."

SESAC, which is sort of the R.C. Cola to ASCAP and BMI's Coke and Pepsi, has in the past mainly represented country and gospel performers, though their website lists some surprisingly well known names such as Bob Dylan. Some indie bands have, surprisingly enough, recently been rep-

resented by SESAC — for instance, the Get Up Kids, Avail, and Braid.

The situation in Canada is somewhat different. Instead of ASCAP, BMI, and SESAC, there is SOCAN. SOCAN's radio monitoring is similar to that performed by U.S. performing rights organizations. A major difference, though, is that apparently bands have more possibility of receiving a portion of performance fees paid by clubs to SOCAN.

The policy applies to venues where the cover is at least \$6, which sounds like they're considering places smaller than the arenas ASCAP and BMI care about. Payment relies on the club or the band informing SOCAN that the performance has taken place, and SOCAN mentions on their website forms for this purpose.

Sounds like it might a bit of a hassle, and Kim Kinakin, formerly of Canadian band Sparkmarker reflects, "Maybe we were too punk for our own good, but we never submitted shows in licensed venues to get royalties. Because we tended to play all ages shows in halls and such, we always forgot to submit those forms when we did play bars or big venues."

All three U.S. organizations (but apparently not SOCAN) have search engines on their websites that allow you to search for things like that song co-written by Kathleen Hanna, Joan Jett, and Desmond Childs (of "Dude Looks Like a Lady" and "Livin' La Vida Loca" fame).

In regards to comparisons between PROs, Jon Ginoli contrasts his experience with that of his bandmate in Pansy Division, Chris Freeman. "Pansy Division has dealt with both BMI and ASCAP and would not recommend ASCAP to anyone. Chris was with ASCAP and I was with BMI. BMI processed our forms promptly and we got checks in a few months. Chris never received anything—a check, a statement, nothing. When he inquired, he was told the songs hadn't been registered, even though they'd been sent in over 2 years before! They were backlogged and lazy and made lame excuses. He had to wait nine months to end his ASCAP affiliation, and shortly after, BMI checks began appearing. That's our testimonial."

There is also the question of whether it is reasonable for small clubs to pay into a system which doesn't benefit bands that play there. Ramona Downey, booker for San Francisco venue Bottom of the Hill, says "When they talked to us, they wanted to know how many televisions we had, and whether we play videos. They even ask if you have recorded music on the answering machine." That line of questioning seems to be more about squeezing money out of a club than representing the interests of the bands that actually perform there.

Kinakin mentions that SOCAN "were hounding me and my friends for putting on small diy shows and not paying a royalty fee. It was just bureaucracy and in the end meant not listing our shows in a free weekly that was 'scanned' for possibly revenues. Basically, if they didn't know about it, they wouldn't hassle us."

The amount of money each club pays out over the course of the year to the organizations may divide out to be as little as a dollar a band, since a club with bands nearly every night could play host to a thousand bands in a year. But if you consider that a band may play a hundred or more shows in a year, particularly if they tour heavily, that adds up to a lot of baloney sandwiches.

King Coffey again: "Most new bands these days play original songs AND aren't registered with ASCAP/BMI, so it doesn't make sense for a venue to have to pay these fees since the vast majority of songs being performed aren't registered compositions anyway. For clubs that feature this kind of music, I think a dramatically reduced license fee would be fair."

In response to the question of whether the payment of license fees might be revamped in the future, Rich Stim, who besides being a member of the bands MX-80 and Angel Corpus Christi is author of *Music Law: How To Run Your Band's Business* (Nolo Press) says, "I'm pretty

by larry bob ■

# the sopranos

a review by  
robyn marasco



They are not singers. I had originally thought it was some documentary on Maria Callas, Joan Sutherland, and Leontyne Price. But it has nothing to do with opera. They are a family. They are the Soprano family. When I first met the Soprano family, I had an open mind. I mean, the Marascos have some things in common with the Sopranos. Both families live in affluent New Jersey communities. Both families are Italian-American. And I was even told there was a Soprano daughter who wanted out just as much as I did. Perhaps she saw Berkeley, California as her escape.

But this family is fictional. HBO's new hit series *The Sopranos* has television critics and television viewers glued to their armchairs every Monday night to gain further acquaintance with the Soprano family. The episode follows the professional, familial, and psychological life of Tony Soprano. This should come as no surprise to those who know that television adores the male head of household. *Three's Company* was no anomaly in this regard. But Tony Soprano proves more convincing in this role than Jack Tripper. Jack Tripper is so young, so

weak, so Anglo-Saxon. Tony Soprano is so wise, so strong, and so Italian. He embodies the stereotype of the patriarchal Italian husband and father. His home is his mini-Rome. And for this we fear him, respect him, and adore him.

This is the image. We see the Italian-American patriarchal figurehead in practically every cultural representation of Italian-Americans, from *The Godfather* to *Summer of Sam*. *The Sopranos* continues in that tradition, which is only an exaggerated version of the American family structure. We, as viewers, love Tony. We are fascinated by his business ventures (he is a mobster – aren't all Italians?). We respect his attempts to separate mob duties with family obligations (he is a well-intentioned father – aren't all patriarchs?). We are charmed by his flirtation with his psychiatrist (he is an unfaithful husband – aren't all men?). And so during each episode, we get to know and respect Tony Soprano. The male viewer emulates his strength and power. The female viewer falls in love with this charming stallion.

Tony as a murderer, objectifier and exploiter of women, bigot, and thug is simply part of the package. It is what makes his so complex, so honest, so human. And after my first two-hour acquaintance with the Soprano family, my father said to me, "This is the way things really are. This is life." Sorry, Dad, this is not the way things are for most people. Most people don't drive expensive cars and live in fancy suburban neighborhoods. Most people are not mobsters. Most people do not operate strip clubs as a front for Mafia activities. Most people can't afford psychiatrists. Although the public perception is that roughly 74% of Italian-Americans are involved in organized crime, the reality is that less than 1% are in any way connected to mob activities. Therefore, can such images truly be called 'real'? And if this is an accurate representation of life for some, should it be packaged and sold to American audiences as romantic and exciting? And should it be the standard against which Italian-American men compare and judge themselves? Should it remain the most prominent image of the Italian-American family?

Actually, I think the Soprano family captures a series of stereotypes. And part of the success of stereotypes resides in their ability to capture a portion of truth, exaggerate and mutilate that truth, and spit it out as basis for prejudicial attitudes and expectations. I have already discussed one significant stereotype: the Italian-American patriarch. There are more. Let me simply skim the

sure that in the next decade, the performance royalty radio distribution systems will change with the advent of "encoded" music. Companies will release songs that have codes embedded that are read by audio scanners. Every radio performance will be calculated and payments will probably become more equitable. (It will be the radio equivalent of Soundscan). Whether this will trickle down to college radio depends on whether those stations buy the equipment capable of reading the codes."

However, in regards to live performance fees, he says, "I don't expect much of a change for concert performances and I'm not sure there is really need to revamp the system to include smaller venues that book local bands. I definitely support the "little guy" in music and would categorize both of my bands as "little guys", but I'm also aware of the practical side of the music business and tracking small venues that book several bands a night would be a logistical nightmare. Somebody would have to keep track every song performed by every band at the club (good luck with that one). If payments are similar to radio play, then we're really only talking about a few dollars for a show. I don't think that's worth the effort."

Establishments that have jukeboxes pay a separate license fee. This fee is collected for BMI, ASCAP, and SESAC by the Jukebox License Organization. With modern CD jukeboxes, it seems like electronically

keeping track of what songs are played disk would be a simple addition to the mechanism, one that could be the most accurate indicator of all of what's played and who should be paid.

Jerry Bailey of BMI confirms that "there is not a direct path for licensing revenues from clubs to flow to the groups who play in the clubs, assuming these groups receive college radio airplay only." In reference to the different situation with fees from clubs and businesses in other countries, he says, "I understand that Canada and a few European countries do monitor music in some of these businesses. These countries have much smaller populations than the U.S. and license a smaller number of music clubs. Because of the huge number of such businesses in the U.S., it is not economically feasible for an American performance rights organization to track the songs used in these businesses. In most cases, there are hundreds of songs performed in the establishments, while their license fees are relatively small. BMI strives to return as much revenue to affiliated copyright owners as possible, and the point is reached that the cost of tracking music in smaller businesses is not cost-efficient."

Despite the disappointing state of affairs in regard to distribution of fees paid for non-broadcast use of music, I think it is still a good idea for bands to join performing rights organizations, because at least payment for college radio airplay is possible. ☐



surface...

1.) *The submissive wife* – She is a woman who knows her place. She doesn't ask her husband any questions. Where does the money come from? Who is that woman on the telephone? Where were you last night? She does not dare utter these questions. She cries. She throws temper tantrums. She is a child around her man. She occasionally needs a slap. She often needs drugs – valium, cocaine, gin and tonic. She stands by her man, mostly because she loves the expensive homes, cars, and clothes. But she is always suspicious. She knows enough about what he is doing. It is not even behind her back that her man engages in his own business and pleasure. He could do it right in front of her. What could she really say about it anyway? She perfects the tasks to which she is naturally suited – wife and mother.

2.) *The Best Friend* – He is a confidant. He understands and empathizes with the personal struggles endured by our Mafia Man. He is "uncle" though unrelated to the family. But he is never fully trusted. Our Mafia Man, at the end of the day, stands alone. That is a part of his continual torment. He can never really get close to anyone, and thus, become vulnerable. And the end of the story, the best friend usually dies.

3.) *The Whore* – She is the figure of promiscuity and sexual appetite. She is not the "other woman" because our hero never limits himself to just one or just two. She is the opposite of the Catholic Virgin Mary. She embodies sin, passion, sensuality and really big tits (which, I suppose, codifies even her role as mother). According to this ever-so-complex and careful cultural representation, Italian-American women can be classified in one of two roles: the submissive wife or the whore. But these figures are simply dual components of the male psyche. Our Mafia Man wants both women. He needs both female figures to satisfy his two primary appetites: territorial power and sexual gratification. Culture depicts this male hero as simply an elaboration of so-called male instincts. It further depicts his female extensions as a vessel for male desire, thus perpetuating and naturalizing the myth of so-called female behavior.

4.) *The Bigot* – actually, this is everyone aforementioned.

5.) *The Outsider* – He is supposed to fly in the face of my analysis. He is the one who doesn't quite fit in to this perfect portrait. He's got jungle fever. Or he a punk rocker at heart. Or he's really goofy. Or he's not and will never be a *made man*. Or he's an undercover FBI agent. The outsider does not undermine the stereotypical image. He is a crucial part of it, as all conflict and disruption (the foundation of this wild and instinctual existence) depends upon him. He unmasks the characters. He pronounces stereotype as fact.

6.) *The two children* – There might be more than two. But there are at least two. That is because one child must carry on the tradition, while the other child must rail against it. And depending upon the story, we identify with one child over the other. But we as viewers always cherish and respect the tradition, embodied in our beloved patriarchal figurehead. No matter how passionately we may identify with the outsider or the rebel child, we internalize a romanticized and idealized portrait of the tradition.

And there you have it – the preliminary ingredients for a contemporary mob story. You need other things too. Essential to the success of any mob story: music, violence, cars, racial slurs, a dash of humor, big guns, and plenty of tits.

The brilliant minds behind *The Sopranos* skillfully incorporated tits into every episode without it seeming contrived or intentional. Tits just blend into the background of the scene. It is in this way that *The Sopranos* learned from cop shows

(which, in turn, learned from previous mob movies). Ever wonder why so many police investigations must go on in strip clubs? Ever notice that the most serious of police matters must be discussed over drinks at the local gentlemen's club? This allows tits to become a part of the *mise en scène*, without requiring any acknowledgment from the men on the screen. Tits are for the male viewers. But because the men on the screen can proceed without explicit recognition of tits, their characters remain untarnished by their somewhat inappropriate professional environment.

There is nothing wrong with tits per say. There is nothing wrong with tits on the television or movie screen. But there is something wrong with tits as part of the background scenery, with women as part of the overall stage decoration. There is something wrong with women situated within the *mise en scène* as any object would be, perhaps like a chair or a painting. If one is going to incorporate tits into an episode of *The Sopranos*, at least be a *man* about it. At least acknowledge tits, and the women to whom they belong. If treating women as human beings and not simply decoration is not a possibility, at least recognize that they are strategically placed to titillate the viewer's senses. At least admit that tits as background decoration assumes women are no different from other ornamental objects. I want to hear Tony Soprano exclaim, "These tits really add to the ambience of my professional environment." Or perhaps he could say, "These tits are so nice, I don't even notice the whole package. I've got my money's worth just in these tits". And then allow viewers to judge themselves and the characters with whom they identify.

And so my meeting with *The Sopranos* was similar to my introduction to so many other Mafia families. And a prominent Italian-American actor once remarked that if Hollywood didn't make gangster movies, there would be no Italians on screen. That may be true. So at least Italian-Americans are visible, which is more than can be said for East Asian-Americans, South Asian-Americans, Latinos, Irish-Americans, and just about every other ethnic group that comprises a part of American culture, though enjoys little or no cultural representation. I applaud Scorsese and Coppola just as much as the next avid film viewer. I can't help but celebrate the success and talent of contemporary Italian-American actors like Robert DeNiro and Al Pacino. And of course there is Sal Mineo, whose name is often overshadowed by the legacy of James Dean. So, in short, I appreciate and enjoy visibility. I just hope for a challenge to the dominant cultural representation of Italian-Americans. I await competing images of masculinity within these representations. I want a direct challenge to the stereotypical Italian-American woman, the patriarchal Italian-American family, the bigoted Italian-American community, and the violent, oversexed, animalistic, yet dignified Italian-American man.

Film and especially television flounder without the security of stereotypes. The stereotypical Italian-American as mobster is both easily accessible and as sexy, enticing, and intimidating as can be. Therefore, it is pretty easy to sell. And we viewers who purchase these stereotypes hope to be as tough and strong and cool as the men and as sexy and submissive as the women. And we will inevitably fail. Not because these images represent "the way things are," but precisely because they don't. ☿

# pinhole photography

Angela Shackelford

Photography is a medium that I have always wanted to explore. I was able to do that as part of my curriculum as a computer art student at Bowling Green State University. It was then that I was introduced to an alternative form of photography known as pinhole photography.

When I was introduced to examples of this type of photography, I noticed right away how rich and detailed the images were. I found out what type of camera made the images and how the camera worked, and it's simplicity fascinated me.

A pinhole camera is quite simply, a light resistant box or container, that has a hole the size of a pin in it. A camera can be made quite easily with a few basic supplies, such as a light resistant container, like a cardboard container that is reinforced by a matte black spray paint. A small, flat and squared piece of metal (such as aluminum) is used for the actual pinhole, forming a perfect circle for the light. The container is sealed tightly, so no light can leak in, and the light from the pinhole is projected on to photographic paper on the inside of the container.

To find out more information about this form of photography, check the local library. The internet is also a great resource in finding out how to make and use these cameras, and to see other examples of pinhole images. Some internet addresses are:

<http://home.sol.no/~gjon/pinhole.htm>

<http://www.t10-laba.mun.ca/~tracy4/pinhole.htm>

<http://www2.ari.net/glsmyth/>

This series of photographs were taken within my own apartment. I was interested in using my own living space as a subject because I felt each room had a cluttered and unique feeling to it. I would leave my pinhole camera out (which was made out of a Quaker oatmeal container) for a general time span of about six hours. My housemates would come in and out of the house throughout the day and they would leave hints of their presences in my images. For example, in one of the kitchen images, on the left side, there are traces of chairs being moved around from people moving them around all day. This shows where most of the action takes place in the room. The camera is not only documenting one moment, but a series of events that take place through out the day.

A noticeable quality about this series of work, as with many pinhole images, is the amount of space that the camera captures. I could set my camera on top of the refrigerator or on the bookshelf and the images would capture everything with a fish eye lens quality (because of the curvature of the oatmeal container). There is also an infinite depth of field that can be seen within the images. No matter where you put the camera or how close it is to something, it will not become out of focus.

I like the aesthetic feeling that the pinhole camera can produce and I plan on making more of these images. The exciting thing about it is, not only do I get to take pictures that I am happy with, but I get to create the camera that produces them. And with each unique camera that I make, comes a whole new group of unique photos. ☿







# WHITE ACADEMICS ASSIMILATIONIST CULTURE MEANINGFUL RESISTANCE

JOHN STREAMAS

There is a moment in Scott Hicks's film *Snow Falling on Cedars* when a Japanese American community rises from its courtroom benches to cast a meekly grateful gaze upon the white male protagonist who has just produced evidence that will free Kazuo Miyamoto from a murder charge. This plunge into obsequiousness, into racial abjection, is the falsest moment in a film that wears its liberal racial politics as a badge. To be sure, Hicks's white male, unlike the white male protagonist in Alan Parker's 1990 film *Come See The Paradise*, does not win the hand of the beautiful young Japanese American woman. In fact, it is this woman's husband who is exonerated by the evidence he produces. And so this story is certainly racially savvier than most mainstream racial narratives. Still, it is framed by the perspectives of assimilationist white men: director, narrator, protagonist.

Before making *Come See The Paradise*, Alan Parker made *Mississippi Burning*, which is presumably based on an FBI investigation into the murders of Civil Rights activists Michael Schwerner, James Chaney, and Andrew Goodman. The film was blamed by virtually all left-leaning critics for making two white men its protagonists and for suggesting that the FBI stood for progress and racial justice. In a perceptive review-essay in *Radical History Review* (No. 45, 1989, pages 125-36), Sundiata K. Cha-Jua repeats these charges but adds that the film's major problem is that its narrative is constructed so that African Americans are "disparaged" and that, as a community, they are virtually denied "self-agency." This is not to say that stories about race must never be told from a white perspective. The life of the murdered Schwerner, a white activist in the Congress of Racial Equality, is, says Cha-Jua, "a legitimate storyline for a movie." But films such as *Mississippi Burning*, *Come See The Paradise*, and *Snow Falling On Cedars* falsify history by conferring on white male protagonists the sole responsibility and privilege of achieving justice, reducing oppressed communities to obsequious supporting roles in their own struggles. That is, such films, empowering only those who already have power, fail to tell the stories of the powerless.

Not long ago, on a graduate students' e-mail list, a white woman said that her young daughters will see Disney's film *Mulan*, so that they might get a strong dose of women's empowerment, a lesson that can only be enhanced by the protagonist's being Japanese. A Japanese American woman sent a brief corrective: the protagonist is Chinese, and the difference is significant. The white woman scolded her for being "picky" and missing the point. Off-list, a number of men and women of color wondered at this woman's insensitivity to history and racial politics and gender politics. She doesn't need to know the long-running feud between Frank Chin and Maxine Hong Kingston over "ownership" of the Fa Mulan story, nor must she read the story itself. She needs only to think about Disney's version, where "empowerment" means that the protagonist saves her people by becoming virtually male, and where becoming a woman again means resuming her "femininity" to be a good wife for a prince. The standard for heroism and virtue is entirely male: Mulan is no revolutionary, and she doesn't

even desire to subvert male rule. A graduate student earning a doctorate in American Culture Studies should know that her daughters won't learn a revolutionary empowerment from Disney's uncomprehending story. Yet this woman is certainly not alone.

Critics find empowerment for persons of color and "aliens" in old Star Trek episodes and for women in *Thelma And Louise* and *GI Jane*, as if to suggest that one marginalized character's heroic moment achieves subversion and inspires audiences to empower themselves. After all, these liberal television shows and films at least teach tolerance and often admire feisty rebellion in an occasional protagonist. But stories are always framed by a narrator's perspective that is in turn framed by a writer's or director's perspective. And careful audiences recognize, in the framing perspectives of these mass culture stories, a white male narrative authority. Star Trek and *Thelma And Louise* aren't about revolutionary empowerment for oppressed communities. They're about the empowerment, from within the dominant cultural system, of exceptional individuals. We don't need to know much about dominance to realize that it secures itself partly by giving access to power to a few marginalized individuals.

Furthermore, various oppressed communities are manipulated into competing with each other for access. In the US, Asian Americans seem to have become a "model minority" not by hard work and faith in an "American dream"—though we are taught to believe this—but by the economic whims of a dominant culture. The success stories of Michelle Kwan and Tiger Woods don't translate into racial justice for the Asian American and African American communities. If a young girl in an American Chinatown aspires to be the next Michelle Kwan or a young boy in Detroit aspires to be the next Tiger Woods, does the dominant culture quake in terror?

This "empowerment from within" could come from a 12-step recovery program, from a New Age spiritualism, from an entrepreneurial guidebook. That it comes from much cultural criticism should distress us. For whether its source is postmodernism or populism, its effect is the same: an anti-intellectual assimilationism that preserves stability and suppresses meaningful resistance. If we look for closure, we will find it, although, if we are postmodernists, we will regard it as transgressive border-crossing, as destabilizing hybridity and anti-historical multiplicity. John Fiske sees it in the arrangement of family photographs in an immigrant Mexican family's living room. These people "empower" themselves. But are they or their immigrant neighbors any farther from poverty?

Does their "empowerment" repeal Propositions 187 and 209? Fiske could just as easily be endorsing a Mexican version of Feng Shui. To celebrate such trivial empowerment is to distract us from injustice. "Empowerment from within" is assimilationist because, by concentrating on acts of individual agency, it tacitly endorses the larger perspectives of mainstream racial and gender narratives. It agrees with a conservative demand that marginalized individuals "pick themselves up by their own bootstraps." When friends urge a woman of color to "work within the system," they

Films such as *Mississippi Burning*, *Come See The Paradise*, and *Snow Falling On Cedars* falsify history by conferring on white male protagonists the sole responsibility and privilege of achieving justice, reducing oppressed communities to obsequious supporting roles in their own struggles.



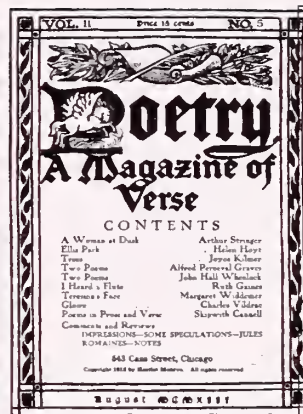
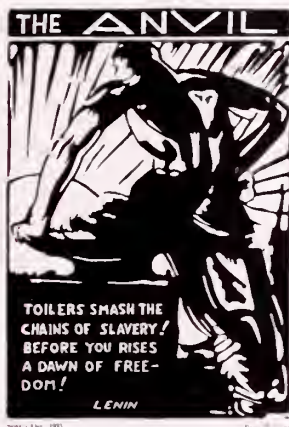
endorse not only the system but also the assimilationist politics by which the consent of oppressed peoples is secured. And they privilege individual freedom over communal justice.

Many of today's white academics grew up with the Civil Rights movement. Perhaps they were stirred by Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream, outraged by the murders of Freedom Riders. Probably they rejected black nationalism as extreme and essentialist. In the 1980s some of them embraced postmodernism's anti-essentialism, while others clung to an old coherent dream of individual freedoms. They challenged Euro-masculine canons and gave us "multiculturalism" and "diversity." And now many of them govern our programs in humanities and social sciences. Bereft of ideas for further reforms, they attribute continuing inequities to "the system," meaning central administrations, boards of trustees, even state legislatures. Fearing conservative white backlash, they warn that affirmative action is endangered and assure us that they're on our side. Yet we sense—those of us who reject their stale assimilationist liberalism—that, ultimately, they fear us far more than they fear old fustbudget deans and chancellors. For when we challenge their authority and demand reforms in their curriculum and pedagogy—that is, when we demand that our stories be taught sometimes, just sometimes, from our own narrative perspectives so that we might determine our work and its rewards—they portray us as troublemakers and themselves as victims who just want what's right for everybody. Why can't we just work with them and empower ourselves from within the system?

Sundiata K. Cha-Jua describes for *Radical History Review* the state of academics and filmmakers:

U.S. academics have a hard time situating social movements in the political system: the prevailing view among scholars, until recently, was that social movements were the result of maladjusted, discontented, but charismatic individuals who manipulate the masses; social movements were viewed as inherently irrational, or at best, pre-political. Filmmakers share this liberal bias and have, in the main, portrayed social activists as either naive or malevolent. Social movements and their activists are problematic for American film producers, politically, because they signify ideologies and tactics outside the narrow mainstream of pluralism and electoral politics. (130-31)

I would delete "until recently," as the description still applies. The politics of "empowerment from within" works not when individuals deviate into the "irrational" and "malevolent" but when they assimilate. Most academics and filmmakers want the closure of stability, and the easiest route to stability is individual heroism, whether in the conservative form of a white male protagonist or in the liberal form of a self-empowered woman and/or person of color. Meaningful and productive resistance, inherently unstable, is the work of whole communities of "maladjusted" and "discontented" troublemakers. ☿



## POETRY ZINES IN THE 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY by Michael Basinski

James Joyce, William Burroughs and Jack Kerouac were innovative and provocative writers. They, along with many others like Allen Ginsberg, Anne Waldman, Kathy Acker and Charles Bukowski, have become counter cultural icons, and they shaped the ideology of the underground and influenced the Political Left. They began their careers as small press and zine authors. The medium that first made public their work, defended it, distributed it and promoted it was the independent press. Without the small press entrepreneur, zineter or editor, the rhymed stanza would dominate poetry and poetry's subject matter would engage only the world of first snow, family dogs, butterflies, bluebirds and driftwood. The expressive, experimental and progressive little literary magazine, poetry zine before the term was coined, has premiered all progressive, new and vibrant 20th century poetry. Since 1912 the shape, style and form of the poetry zine has changed but its purpose has steadfastly remained to challenge, break and reinvent the mundane, entrenched, deaf, academic literary oligarchy, and to remain always progressive, radical, free, self-determined and utterly independent.

All poetry zines are linked to the Imagist movement and Modernism. In 1912, when they were in their early 20s, Ezra Pound, Hilda Doolittle and Richard Aldington founded what Pound dubbed the "Imagist" school. That year he contacted Harriet Monroe, then 25 and a prisoner woman publisher. She was about to start a poetry magazine in Chicago. Her zine was called *Poetry*, and in March 1913 she published Pound's Imagist manifesto. By this act Modernism and the literary zine were given a birthday. Poetry would never be the same and rhyme and measured lines were demoted to grandmother's Victorian lace covered parlor. Quickly following Monroe's bold venture was Wyndham Lewis and his purposefully subversive magazine *Blast*. Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap began publishing *The Little Review* in 1914 in New York City. In 1919, *The Little Review* was charged with publishing obscenity after the Nosikaa chapter of *Ulysses* appeared. Making it new were Alfred Kreymborg and a group from New Jersey calling itself the others. *The Others*, their magazine, was published between 1915 to 1919. Moving from its New Jersey origins the zine was headquartered in Chicago at The Radical Book Shop on Clark Street and in New York at The Washington Square Bookshop in Greenwich Village. One of the more colorful characters publishing in the Village at the time was Guido Bruno. During the teens he published *Bruno's Weekly*, *Bruno's*, *Bruno's Review of Two Worlds* and *Bruno's Chapbooks*. In 1926 Samuel Roth began publishing his magazine *Two Worlds*, and Eugene Jolas and Elliot Paul began publishing *Transition*, which serialized *Finnigans Wake*.

The first waves of little literary magazines were opulent, relative to today's standards. Yet, they were no less subversive. Their purpose was to completely alter the landscape of literature. To that end they were successful. The means to their end was seductive, elegant camouflage, rather than direct confrontation. This changed after the stock market collapsed in 1929. The social upheavals of the 1930s can be traced in the zines of The Depression. Jack Conroy, editor of *The Anvil*, proclaimed that his zine would publish raw enthusiasm over polished banality. The images also changed. Heavily muscled working men and women replaced dreamy surreal and cubist images. Among the many zines that represented the revolutionary mood of the 1930s were *Smoke*, *The Rocking Horse* and *The Partisan Review*.

America changed again after WWII. The country became conservative. Ezra Pound was confined to St. Elizabeth's mental hospital. However, he was not forgotten. A magazine called *Nine* formed a post WWII nucleus of support for him. His presence on American soil, McCarthyism, American prosperity, and the Abstract Expressionists in New York spawned a new literary revolution. Robert Creeley's *Black Mountain Review* published open field poetry. Cid Corman's *Origin* and LeRoy Jones and Diana DiPrima's *The Floating Bear*, as well as *Measure*, *Farther*, *The Magazine of Further Studies*, *Jugen*, *The Ark* and others supported a new generation of writers, among them poets of the Beat Generation and more specifically Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg.



In the fall of 1958 the University of Chicago suppressed an issue of *The Chicago Review* because it was allegedly publishing filthy writing. In defiance of the University of Chicago edicts and the condemnation of the *Chicago Daily News*, the contents of the suppressed issue were published as *Big Table*. The writing of Kerouac, William Burroughs and Gregory Corso could not be ignored. This bold act paved the way for independent editors of the 1960s mimeo revolution. Magazines like *Ole* promoted poets like Charles Bukowski and D. A. Levy. Ed Sander's *Fuck You: A Magazine of the Arts* challenged the morals that supported the Vietnam War and called for sexual and political freedom. Continuing in the tradition of literary revolution, a decade and a half later, the L-A-N-G-U-A-G-E poets were, in part, launched by a simply formatted, photocopied zine called *L-A-N-G-U-A-G-E*. And Feminist lit-zines like *How(ever)* brought gender parity to the previously male dominated world of American poetry.

No less, in the 1990s, lit-zines promote new fashions in poetry. Visual poetry magazines like *Juxta*, *Generator*, *Frozen Hypnosis*, *Trasnmog* and *The Lost and Found Times* are shattering the boundaries between sound, visual and traditional text. Another fashion of this decade is the rise of the anti-poetry poem. These poems are stark and candid and reveal the sad, harsh and raw truth of American underbelly life, and these poems are published in zines like *Beet*, *Nerve Cowboy*, *Lime Green Bulldozer*, *Bone Sauce*, *The Wooden Head Review* and *Lunch Zine*. This poetry, these zines and their editors, refuses to allow the academy and intellectual masturbation to rule the day.

## BIG TABLE 1

TALK ABOUT  
OLD ANGEL MIDNIGHT

THE GARMENT OF RA  
FURTHER SORROWS OF PRIAPUS

CHICKEN'S BROTHERS  
NAKED LUNCH

OTHERS  
THE OLD EXPRESSIONS ARE ALWAYS  
AND THERE ARE ALWAYS OTHERS  
January 1919 20c a Copy

## BRUNO'S WEEKLY



EDITED BY CAROL ANN AND BOB LEE  
FOR WASHINGTON SQUARE  
Five Cents December 1961, 1918

The story of this century's American poetry is the tale of committed, revolutionary magazine editors. They consistently sacrificed time, energy and resources to correct social injustice and to promote freedom of expression in the arts. Today's poetry zines serve the same purpose as those intrepid zines of the Lost Generation. The magazines that supported the poetry and prose of Joyce, IHD and Ezra Pound in the early decades of the century are one in the same tradition as the poetry and prose in an ezine like *Deluxe Rubber Chicken* and zines like *Brouhaha*, R. L. Nichols's *South 666 Bitch*, Mr. Ski-mask's *The Riverside Art Review*, *Art:Mag* and *Poetry Motel*.

Progressive poetry functions in literary networks, and the centerpiece, life blood and lifeline of all progressive poetic networks and literary life was and is the zine. They create an alternate conversation, a network of appreciative ears and a medium for experimentation. Poetry zines have a rich and wonderful history, which has opposed and triumphed over the cultural baron's of publishing, culture, art and poetry.

As a man, I feel cheated. As far back as I can remember, I have been forcefed nothing but lies about my sexuality. As a kid growing up in the Bible belt, sex was naughty. It was only for reproductive purposes between married adults and even then wasn't to be discussed outside the soap opera realm of gossip. In health class, they fed upon the pubescent fears of young men and instilled in us the idea that sex wasn't about pleasure or bonding or orgasms you can feel in your ears, but about a foot long penis and a submissive partner that would moan for a few minutes until you came. We are taught that the male orgasm is one and the same as ejaculation and that our most sexually potent parts are dirty and illegal in 17 states. Reinforcing these dictums are a million and one media images helping further define our sexualities into the anti-sensual, anti-pleasure traditions of Judeo-Christian culture.

Considering the overwhelming pervasiveness of this mental, emotional and sexual coercion, it is no wonder that so many men remain sexually unfulfilled (and shitty lovers to boot!).

Although an adequate dissolution of these bullshit constructs would fill several volumes and take years, here is a brief guide to help you on your way.

## The Male Sex System Revealed in Less Than Ten Sentences.

Let's say that you're getting sexually aroused. The three cylinders (cavernosi) within your penis (one surrounding the urethra that composes the glans or "head" and one on either side) expand, creating a hydraulic pressure in the arteries which feed them. The veins charged with the duty of releasing the blood for circulation back to the body's carburetor (the heart), responding to swelling of the penis, are cinched off and the erection solidifies. A few minutes or hours later, the tingly feeling around the swollen phallus becomes too much to bear and you succumb to your taunting organs. Two small glands below the prostate, called the cowper's glands, send a lubricating "grease" down the urethra, essentially paving the way for a friction free ejaculation. The testicles respond by contracting in towards the body, essentially "pushing" their bounty of sperm up through the vas deferens past the pubic bone and beyond the bladder. Soon thereafter, the sperm merge together with the creamy product of the Seminal Vesicle and then later with the watery harvest from the prostate gland (these latter two organs discharge a variety of substances in their respective packages; some that neutralize acids in the vagina, some that feed the sperm and some that inhibit the growth of bacteria). Less than three seconds later, the seminal cocktail comes flowing out into orifice, bedsheet or palms. Throughout this whole process lies the modest pubococcygeus muscle which, if properly empowered, can prevent, stop or otherwise manipulate this process by applying pressure to various points.

## Ejaculation Overseer of a Man's Sexuality.

First and foremost, ejaculation and orgasm are NOT the same thing. Although orgasm can and usually does appear immediately before ejaculation, the two entities are very different. Unfortunately, tenth grade health classes and mainstream media have convinced us that ejaculation and orgasm are one and the same, the culmination of all things sexual in men.

Ejaculation does tend to dominate male sexuality, as once the seminal soup goes flying, a coup de grace has been effectively delivered to the erection, and too often, a passionate night of lovemaking. As we know from personal experience and too many bad jokes on sitcoms, this event tends to occur far sooner than our partners would like and in most cases, deprives us of well deserved orgasms. By achieving an understanding of the mechanics behind ejaculation, we can learn to control it within ourselves and our partners and get on with more important things, like giving and receiving gasping, grasping orgasms that make your feet twitch.

Ejaculation is a biological response to particular stimuli. Just as a sneeze is a biological reaction to irritation in the sinuses or a fart the biological counterpart to mounting pressure on the nerves within the sphincter, ejaculation is the body's response to manipulation of the nerves surrounding the glans, head, and shaft of the penis. Once stimulation reaches its ejaculatory quota, the aforementioned process of seminal expungement starts. Here are some tricks that can help control ejaculation.

### Piss before you start...

A build up of urine in the bladder places pressure on the prostate, seminal vessicle and pubococcygeus muscles within the male anatomy and helps exaggerate the urge to ejaculate. Similarly, just as an individual gets antsy when they have to pee really, really bad on a long car



# MALE SEXUALITY

## Things They Never Taught You In Health Class (or On TV)

trip, so does a man get antsy when he has to pee during sex. Draining the bladder beforehand can help relax the entire experience and allow you to concentrate more on what you're doing.

### Breathe a lot and relax.

Like when surfing, getting tattooed or anything else exciting, we often forget to breathe when we're fucking. Aside from generally speeding everything up, destroying our concentration and otherwise distracting us, the lack of oxygen actually stimulates the nerve clusters in our parts and helps that ejaculation work its way to the forefront of our mind. Furthermore, a lack of oxygen also tends to make people tense up, which again hinders the judicious execution of the sex act. So slow down there, hotrod!!! Take deeper breaths, relax, and start changing the rhythms, speed and directions of your thrusts...I guarantee your partner(s) will appreciate it.

### Try a cock ring.

There are generally three different variations on the cock ring; one for the shaft, one for the testes/scrotum ("parachutes"), and those that do both. The basic purpose of a cockring is to help keep blood in your erect penis and/or to keep other fluids which may end your erection backed up in your parts where they belong. No need to go to that trendy bondage shop down the street to buy a brandname aluminum alloy cockring; you can make them yourself for a lot less. For the shaft type, go to the hardware store and try and find metal O rings that look about the same diameter (or a bit smaller) than your erect shaft. As a general rule, using a large diameter ring or plural rings is the most comfortable. Simply pull the ring around your shaft as you are getting near your point of maximum erection and make sure that the ring is tight, but not so tight your pee turns blue and shrivels up. You can also take that punky little leather bracelet with pyramid studs off your wrist and strap it around your shaft, just like it was designed for. When used correctly, shaft cockrings can give you some of the longest, hardest erections you have ever had.

The second kind, the parachute, fits around your scrotum and is designed to pull your testes away from your penis to fend off ejaculation. If you ever have felt your testes/perineal area during an ejaculation, you know that your testes pull up close to your shaft as ejaculation is occurring. For the parachute, one needs a ring or strap that can be pulled around the scrotum and over the testes into that nice little niche below the base of the penis. Oddly enough, that punky wristband you wear is possibly the right size to use for these purposes (indeed that is where the fashion came from in the first place!!!) and if you go to a sex shop and check out the selection, you will probably find that the designs are very similar. Just strap it on tight enough that it binds your balls below the strap and go to work. You will probably find that you will begin feeling parts of your body that you never knew existed before and that you can fuck for hours and hours without stopping. Of course, this does have some other effects on your bod. After a few hours of fucking without ejaculation, you may find that it feels like someone just kicked you in the groin or slugged you in the stomach. This is generally a good time to take it off and savor the surging ejaculation that often follows the removal of pressure. Sometimes after ejaculation is staved off for a spell, it is difficult to ejaculate for a little while without undue effort.

The third kind is a combination of the aforementioned shaft and parachute methods in which both a parachute and a shaft ring are worn simultaneously or a single ring used as both. Experiment and see what works best for you. (I have found that certain shower curtain rings, especially the big wooden ones, work exceptionally well for all purposes...they can be found at any DIY/hardware store)

### The "push and pull method".

This uses many of the same principles as a cock ring, but without the equipment. As you feel the familiar tingling, surging sensation that signals the onset of ejaculation, reach behind you and pull your testes away from the base of your (or your partner's) penis. This will hold off the ejaculation and perhaps (at least in me) lead to the facilitation of a big fat, ear tingling orgasm.

Similarly, there is another trick that uses the same timing, but instead of grabbing your scrotum, take two fingers and push down on your perineum (the space between your testicles and anus). As you apply direct pressure to that space,

you are actually pinching off the outersection of the prostate, vas deferens and the cowper's glands and ejaculation can be prevented, stopped, or at the very least, slowed. Furthermore, because of the prostate stimulation involved, this pinch can actually intensify orgasms tenfold. This trick, what the new agey Taoists call the "million dollar point," takes some practice to perfect, so don't get discouraged if it doesn't work the first few times.

### The Glinch.

The Glinch is a neat little trick from a muscle you probably didn't know you had, the pubococcygeus. By flexing this muscle, you can also stop, prolong, or intensify an orgasm by pinching various parts of the ejaculatory cycle. To practice the glinch, drink lots of water or cheap beer, hit the john and start pissing. Once you get a good flow going, stop it. Then start again. Then stop. Then start. Stop. Start. Stop. Start. Each time you stop your flow of urine, you are helping build up this muscle surrounding part of your prostate, seminal vesicle and vas deferens. This muscle also contracts during orgasm and consequently, being buff from all your practice at the bar, can make your orgasm hit you in the ears. When you are feeling that spine chilling call from below, just squeeze your muscle and be amazed. The more you practice, the better it gets. This is also really handy for anal sex, because it gives you something to hold with.

### The "Green Grass of Home".

If nothing else, just stop thinking about sex. Distract yourself from the tingling of your loins and the wonders of whatever orifice you are feeling on your nether regions. Some of my most profound political philosophy has arisen during the most heated moments of sex as I tried desperately to distract myself from the nagging pressure from below. Try turning your attention away from genitals (too much of sex is tied to genitals anyway) and try focusing it on nibbling your partner's ear or running your finger through their hair or caressing their back. Aside from distracting you and changing the mood of the sex a bit, it also feels nice.

## Other Sex Stuff

Now that you have at least some idea of how to gain the upper hand on the seemingly omnipotent ejaculation leviathan, you can get on to exploring other things that can expand your sex life into areas you didn't know existed.

### Go In the Backdoor.

I know full well that we've all been programmed into believing our rectums to be dirty places only enjoyed by perverts, but if this were what Nature intended, why are the most sexually sensitive points on the male body be located within the rectal cavity? In fact, the composition of the tissues lining the "top" of the rectal cavity (bordering the prostate) are *exactly* the same tissues as those found on the top side of the vagina we've come to know and love as the "G-spot."

To casually stimulate the male "G-spot" inside the rectum, insert a clean, lubricated finger into the anus and gently massage the wall closest to the penis. About 1.5 inches to 2 inches up, you should find a nice spot that makes your head spin when touched. Try rubbing it while having sex or receiving oral sex and experience the best orgasm of your life.

As far as hygiene goes, simply wash your hands before and after stimulation, keep your nails trimmed and watch to not penetrate a mouth or vagina with an unwashed finger, lest you start a bacterial invasion.

### Have Lots of Sex.

The best way to refine your sexuality is to have lots of sex. Period. Try multiple partners of both genders and experiment with neat and interesting positions. Follow your lust and find what makes you happiest and gives you the best orgasms. Masturbate regularly. Be open and communicative with your partners and ask them to do the same.

Never underestimate the power of a gasping, grasping orgasm to brighten your day! ☿

Mike Albers



# Hooked On Love

Jill Fowler

In a couple of months I will turn 26; in my short span of life I have enjoyed the care and commitment of a very devoted mother, the mental and physical bonding of twinship, the highs and lows of romance, and the affection and reliability of a host of friends. But I don't think I ever experienced true love until last summer. Did I finally meet Mr. Right, you may ask? Far from it.

I spent last summer cycling across the United States from Seattle to Washington D.C. with a group called Bike-Aid. Sixteen women and men representing 11 states, four countries, and all walks of life comprised the Seattle route C.O.W. (community on wheels), and we made a commitment during our first few days together that we were responsible for each other's welfare and that everyone's voice had equal leverage; all decisions were made by consensus, and we shared all aspects of leadership; there would be no followers, no one left behind. Building upon this foundation of community, we quickly came to trust and rely upon one another. Don't get me wrong, our C.O.W. was no utopia on wheels, but it let me experience freedom, acceptance, and love in abundance.

In the experience that was Bike-Aid '99, there were few secrets, little modesty, tons of backrubs, and a great many discussions on everything under the sun. Isolation was an unheard-of concept, and so was detachment; emotions rode on the surface of our daily lives, and my friends and I often considered a day incomplete if we hadn't cried. Living in such close quarters with others and sharing daily physical and mental challenges exposed our vulnerabilities, our weaknesses to one another, and we rejoiced in our frailties, seeing them as equally important as our strengths; these qualities made us lovable.

The moment I knew true love came when my friend, Liana, mentioned that as the days passed she gained a clearer picture of my strengths and my weaknesses. She remarked that while she celebrated my strengths, every time she saw one of my weaknesses (my emotional breakdowns, my frustrations, my self-critiquing), she loved me even more. She saw me as someone who displayed my whole self to the world, someone who didn't want to hide behind an impersonal facade. I had never had anyone say something so life-affirming to me. In our contemporary American society, weakness is seen as a character flaw, a failure in one's hardwiring. Americans are taught to ignore or disavow their vulnerable side; after all, a person needs to keep a hard, competitive edge in order to succeed. This philosophy had often constricted my self, and it was a relief to have it debunked by Liana and the other riders.

When the summer ended, I knew I had experienced something few others do, the complete acceptance and reciprocal love of others. Upon returning to the real world and to graduate school, I realized that my idyllic summer was quite out of the ordinary, and that most people lived their lives disconnected from one another. Among my school friends, I half-heartedly tried to recreate some of the euphoric relationships I had on Bike-Aid. For a variety of reasons I failed, and because I lacked a vocabulary to describe what I was seeking to recreate, I found it difficult to discuss my goals with others.

But love works in mysterious ways, and help came in the form of an amazing new work by the feminist, cultural critic bell hooks. Her most recent book *All About Love: New Visions* (William Morrow & Co., 2000) finally gave me the words to articulate not only the loving relationships I had enjoyed but also the loving relationships I hope to still find. hooks attempts, and succeeds in my case, to reshape the general view of love. She decides to write this treatise on love because she sees

our cultural views of love as cynical; love has become an emotion equated with greed and domination not nurturance. hooks points out that even with the proliferation of self-help books like John Gray's *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, love remains an elusive target.

Through 13 essays, hooks explores the complexity of love and how it is taught, received, and spread in American culture. She first defines love, taking her cue from M. Scott Peck's *The Road Less Traveled*, as "the will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth." She goes on to apply this definition to a variety of love relationships: parent-child, humanity-divinity, friend-friend, lover-lover, human-human. hooks makes an effort to expand our narrow view of true love; she argues that genuine love, which combines care, commitment, trust, knowledge, affection, responsibility, and respect, must exist in all human relationships in order for our world to improve. In two of my favorite essays, she urges us to live by a love ethic and to strive for loving communion, no small task in our increasingly alienated world.

Throughout her sixth essay, "Values: Living by a Love Ethic," hooks reiterates that "love can happen only as we let go of our obsession with power and domination." She argues that a "love ethic presupposes that everyone has the right to be free, to live fully and well." For hooks, a commitment to a love ethic fosters the realization that "our lives and our fate [are] intimately connected to those of everyone else on the planet." We can improve our own lives and the lives of others by simply living ethically. She assures us that ethical behavior does not take the fun out of life; to the contrary, it "ensures that relationships in our lives, including encounters with strangers, nurture our spiritual growth." Her simple, idealistic sentences reminded me that not everyone sees America's rugged individualism as a prerequisite for a better world.

hooks removes herself even farther from American individualism in her eighth essay, "Community: Loving Communion." When speaking of community, hooks again returns to the wisdom of M. Scott Peck. Peck's declaration that "[i]n and through community lies the salvation of the world" forms the foundation for this revolutionary chapter. Community exists when individuals come together as a group and dedicate themselves to learning "how to communicate honestly with one another," to forging relationships that "go deeper than their masks of composure," and to developing a "significant commitment to 'rejoice together, mourn together,' and to 'delight in each other, and make other's conditions our own.'" Only when people earnestly attempt to commune with others outside of their oftentimes circumscribed existence will alienation, loneliness, and greed be superseded by love.

hooks' "love song for a nation" is far-reaching in scope and incredibly soul-shaking. I read the 200+ pages in less than two days, and I couldn't stop talking about it. I sent a mass email to all of my Bike-Aid friends imploring them to run to the nearest bookstore or library to pick up this work of Truth. I told them that this book was about us, about our loving community. This book would make them smile, laugh, cry, and reminisce. *All About Love* is bursting with insights on how to recognize lovelessness, practice forgiveness, and celebrate compassion. This book is tailored to impact each reader on a personal level, so my description and my investment in this work derives its importance mainly from my own experiences in love. But no matter your background in one of life's better emotions, bell hooks' *All About Love* is one of those rare pieces that restores idealism while exposing reality. ♣





# Maybe We Should See Other People

## Alternatives to Monogamy

Jason Kucsma and Jen Angel

Just by turning on the television and catching a glimpse of Jerry Springer, Ally McBeal, or any daytime soap opera (and most primetime dramas), it is pretty apparent that monogamy and fidelity issues are at the heart of American consciousness. It is almost a given now that someone in a relationship will "cheat" and divorce hasn't had much of a social stigma in years.

Given our cultural obsession with cheating, it's amazing that monogamy (marriage, serial monogamy, what have you) is still the accepted idea these days, and alternatives are still too taboo to talk about seriously. It seems that in our western culture, monogamy and the idea of marriage and partnership is so basic as to be unquestioned. Millions of times each day, the concept of heterosexual monogamy is reinforced in the movies we see, the sitcoms we watch, the books we read, and more importantly, in the way we talk with each other about our relationships.

This is where the two of us come in. We are both involved in long term open relationships. This means, at the most basic level, that we "see" or "date" more than one person at a time, and we are completely honest and open with everyone. There is no sneaking around, no deception, and no guilt. Could it be that easy?

It is often difficult for people to conceptualize why and how a non-monogamous or open relationship is fulfilling or desirable. That is what we want to talk about here. Our purpose is, simply, to present an alternative and to provide validation for others who are dealing with the same issues in their relationships.

For the purposes of this essay we use the term "partner" to refer to someone with whom we are in a relationship. This is not without hesitation, because we believe this term implies exclusivity. However, we are bound by the narrowness of our language when we talk about matters of the heart.

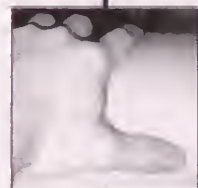
### Why polyamory? Why isn't it just an excuse for promiscuity?

In several discussions with a friend about the nature of open relationships, she often reverts to the statement, "Sure I can be interested in or attracted to more than one person, but I don't have to sleep with them." She is right to some extent. Non-monogamy (or polyamory, "many loves") shouldn't be considered a license to sleep around with whomever we want, but it can be a framework within which we redefine what it means to be intimate with each other. A name like "non-monogamy" carries with it a lot of baggage, mostly because of the misconception that it is synonymous with promiscuity. But we think it is a decent alternative to the traditional ways of thinking about relationships that many find to be inhibiting or disconnected from their own feelings. Going back to what our friend said about sleeping with other people: sure you don't have to go around sleeping with everyone you find attractive or compelling, but being polyamorous allows you the freedom to decide how you want to show your affection for someone in ways that traditional relationships tend to exclude. Polyamory also concedes that sex and physical intimacy are not indications or determinants of love.

Our interactions with others make us feel good about ourselves. When someone is attracted to us, it makes us feel desirable, sexy, and confident. Our interaction with others gives us validation. When you meet a new partner who makes you feel special, loved, and desired, this benefits you and positively affects other areas of your life, outside of your relationship. You feel better about yourself and you look forward to getting up in the morning.

These are feelings which are good and which should be encouraged and sought out. Equally, we feel good when we touch and are touched by others. This physical-ness makes us feel good, sexy, and again, desirable. Humans strive for physical as well as social interaction. It makes us feel needed and loved.

Beyond the idea that we should do what makes us feel good and what creates positivity in our lives, we all should be free to follow our desires instead of suppressing them. This is especially relevant when we talk about the very likely circumstance that you will find more than one person exciting, desirable, attractive or sexy in your lifetime. Within the confines of a traditional relationship, we are expected to brush aside the feelings we may have for anyone other than our mate as if they were a pesky nuisance to the security of the established relationship. Suppressing the feelings you might have for someone other than your mate has the potential to backfire and can manifest itself in the form of insecurity about the status of your relationship or, even worse, in resentment





toward your partner as the most immediate reason why you can't pursue these feelings. In a way, this invalidates those feelings, and make us feel guilty or ashamed when we find someone attractive or exciting, even though it is perfectly natural to do so. Do you ever want to be told that you can't or shouldn't love someone?

For example, a friend recently called with news that she was having a mild crisis in her life because she realized that the person she has been living with for the last couple of years isn't necessarily "the one" person she wants to be with forever. She had spent the last couple of months trying to reconcile that although she loved the person she was living with and thought him to be an amazing individual, she was also feeling similar feelings for another man. The assumptions of her relationship fell back on traditional prescriptions that said she and her "main man" were on the marriage track. Everything they did together should ideally lead to the culmination of their life as husband and wife, but she was already confused and they hadn't even gotten to the altar. What will happen if she ignores those feelings and decides to stay with this man? If she stays with him, will she simply resort to having affairs throughout the time they are together? Will the love she had for him eventually give way to feelings of resentment because she is involved in a relationship that essentially denies the fact that she might feel affection for someone other than her spouse? What if she and her main squeeze began to talk about those other feelings that she is having and suddenly realized he was dealing with the same thing himself? According to traditional ideas of how relationships work, such a realization would mean our friend and her boyfriend should either part ways or choose to ignore the feelings outside their relationship.

This is one illustration of the contradictions couples deal with in traditional monogamy. It doesn't have to be this way, because humans have a larger capacity for love than we are allowing ourselves to express. This is not a zero sum game—to feel love for one, we do not have to reduce our love for another.

## How Does An Open Relationship Work?

As with monogamous relationships, there are different types of open relationships. There are monogamous relationships that are considered casual or committed, with different rules and boundaries. Some couples live together and some don't. Some couples see each other once a week and some every day. Some couples are together primarily for sex while others consider themselves soulmates.

Regardless, most relationships function on a set of rules. Probably not a spelled out, written down, or even discussed set of rules, but an agreed upon or an assumed set of rules nonetheless. Couples agree to things such as how often they are going to see each other or whether it's okay to have sex at his house but not at her house.

Non-monogamous relationships work the same way, but sometimes with different kinds of rules. Each type of open relationship meets a different person's needs. For example, some couples have a no-holds-barred open relationship, where partners are free to see anyone at any time. Some partners in a long-distance relationship may agree to have an open relationship as long as they are living apart from each other. Others may agree that having an open relationship means being casually intimate (kissing, making out and the like) with other people while reserving more intimate acts for each other. Some even agree that they can only seek out the company of someone else to fulfill the physical fantasies or desires that their partner is unable or unwilling to do for them. Some polyamorous people have a primary partner, while others treat all relationships equally.

Regardless of the rules, there is an underlying necessity that the terms must be agreed upon by all involved—communication needs to be open and honest. For example, if a long-distance lovers agree that they should be able to see other people while they are apart, they also need to agree how much of their other relationships should be shared with each other and what is better left unsaid. They could agree to tell each other whenever they become involved with someone new, but the degree to which those details are shared can range from suggested to unspoken. Similarly, any person they become involved with outside their long-distance love affair needs to know exactly what they are getting involved in. Any new partners need to know what you and your other partners have agreed upon and determine from their own perspective if this is something that they want to be involved in.

This honesty can be the hardest part about being in an open relationship. We all know how difficult it can be to finally tell someone how much they mean to you, only to find out the feelings aren't mutual. Now imagine how frustrating it can be to find out that although the person feels the same way about you, they disagree with your lifestyle and so the chance for you two to be involved is nixed.



## The Cornerstones of Non-Monogamy: Separation, Honesty, and Trust

It isn't as simple as just agreeing on a set of rules or guidelines. There are basic prerequisites that must be fulfilled — and these requirements may help you determine whether or not you can deal with the issues involved in an open relationship, and problems like those illustrated above.

Above all else, open relationships require a degree of selflessness. In several discussions we have had, people have suggested that non-monogamy is ultimately a selfish proposition, in that it allows a person to indulge in his or her desires at random with little regard for anyone else involved. Far from that, we think being non-monogamous requires an unprecedented level of altruism. Acknowledging that a person you are involved with may have needs that your relationship doesn't fill requires a great deal of humility, and agreeing that your lover can find that satisfaction outside your relationship is a pretty selfless act as well. This means that you must have the utmost respect for your partner and for their feelings. This is a primary difference between non-monogamy and promiscuity.

One of the cornerstones of non-monogamous relationships is separation - or the ability to evaluate relationships based on their own merit, apart from other current relationships. Am I happy? Am I happy with the way he treats me? Am I getting what I want? Are my needs being met? Are we spending enough time together? These things are evaluated on the basis of our relationship, not in comparison with his other relationships. Of course, it is important to recognize that we are involved in different relationships for different reasons — and we get different things from each of them. It is possible to recognize these differences without prioritizing or ranking.

Here's a quick example. Even though one of us may be in a very happy and secure long-term relationship, she, like many others, can occasionally lose her ability to keep things separated and get frustrated. So, when she saw one of her partners sending a package to his long distance lover, her knee-jerk reaction was "well, he never gives me any presents!" This was a reactionary feeling, despite the fact that she knows she doesn't need presents to be happy in the relationship, and despite the fact that she doesn't feel neglected in the slightest and all her needs are satisfied. All she needed to do was ask herself, "Am I happy with the way that our relationship is?" If the answer is yes, then it doesn't matter how many presents he sends someone else (or how many other people he sleeps with or how many other people he kisses). If she is jealous of the time or attention her partner pays someone else, she needs to take a moment and reevaluate. ("Is it that I don't like him paying attention to her (or him)? Or is it that I'm just not getting enough attention myself?").

Separation of relationships helps avoid the beast of competition that has, for a long time, been a fundamental tenet of western (especially American) culture. Rather than allowing our intimate relationships to be subject to the ugly competition that pervades every other element of our lives, we should allow our personal relationships to develop with security and freedom.

This competition or comparison between other people and relationships also disregards the fact that our relationships with various people can be complementary or mutually beneficial to everyone involved. If, for example, the initial reaction toward one of us showing affection to someone else is allowed to manifest itself in jealousy or contempt, it ignores the fact that the way this new person makes us feel has the potential to affect our other relationships directly. When someone else inspires us, woos us or just reaffirms our love for the potential that people have to do good, it is reflected in all our relationships. Just as we mentioned at the beginning of this essay, the ability another person has to make us feel good about ourselves can have a direct impact on how we interact with others and how we make them feel. Jealousy and competition are, unfortunately, pesky roadblocks to fulfilling relationships.

We have discussed the importance of communication, and maybe it bears repeating that the dialogue between people in open relationships needs to be honest. This means that each person is forthcoming with themselves and their partners about their thoughts and feelings with regards to the status of their relationship. Do I feel comfortable telling my partner that I am interested in pursuing a more intimate relationship with a person with whom I've become smitten? Is our level of honesty such that I can tell my partner that I don't think her or his other partner is treating him or her as well as they should?

It almost seems redundant to suggest that honest communication be an essential part of any non-monogamous relationship. After all, common sense tells us that it is also desirable

## "Free love" In 19th Century America

In 19th century America, "free love" was the name given to a broad range of sexual radicalism. Under its banner were joined, however uneasily, anarchists, socialists, feminists, Christian perfectionists, pioneers of the libertarian wing of the eugenics movement, and others who objected, in one way or another, to Christian, state-sanctioned marriage. In many ways, these 19th century sex radicals seem very contemporary—so much so that we might be inclined to draw close connections between them and those who now agitate for non-monogamous or polyamorous forms of sexual expression—but there are also many ways in which their concerns may seem strange, even conservative, in the contemporary context.

For many "free lovers," the freedom to love—to share affection, to love sexually, and to arrange a household—was inseparable from other freedoms of contract. "Free love" was an analog of "free trade" in the realm of personal affairs. Individualist anarchists applied their "unterrified" approach to Manchester School economics in an attack on Church and State regulation of marriage as fierce as their opposition to the "four monopolies" (tariff, money and banking, intellectual property, land) in the realm of political economy. There seems to have been little dissent among libertarians on the marriage question: Church and State had no authority to interfere with the most intimate contacts and contracts of sovereign individuals. But, then as now, public reaction to scandalous pronouncements about love and marriage led some anarchists to emphasize other, more public aspects of their fight for freedom of contract, while others emphasized these most intimate instances of unjust interference by authority as precisely those on which all other forms of oppression stood. Among the individualist anarchists, "free love" was the instance for fierce feuds—Benjamin Tucker of "Liberty" vs. Moses and Lillian Harman of "Lucifer the Light Bearer," and Josiah Warren vs. the "free love" faction at Modern Times, which included Stephen Pearl Andrews.

Some feminists found in "free love" another cause opposed to patriarchy. Even among the more conservative of the suffragists, there was often an understanding of the marriage relation as essentially the economic form of male supremacy. Freedom to love was in this instance coupled with a critique of

women's place in marriage which sometimes equated the roles of wives and slaves. If marriage is a form of bondage, they argued, how can any form of love within it be free? The fighting was particularly fierce, and the fighters particularly divided, around issues of reproduction and women's right to full control of their bodies. Beyond, and sometimes opposed to, calls for suffrage, these feminists called for liberal divorce laws, access to birth control devices and sex education. Calling attention to the status of women and children as property of the husband, Voltairine de Cleyre claimed that "those who marry do ill" and wrote a poetic indictment of the concept of illegitimacy.

Christian perfectionists, most notably John Humphrey Noyes and the members of the Oneida colony, opposed secular interference in their affairs, and found Biblical support for innovations in the realm of marriage. Believing that the Second Coming had already occurred, freeing them from sin, and reading in the Bible that marriage would not exist in Heaven, they established a system of open marriages, advocating "male continence" as a preferred birth control method. By most standards the Onedean system was a strange mixture of indulgence and restraint. Pleasure was elevated over procreation. Childbearing was considered onerous for women and the emission of semen an unhealthy drain on the vitality of men.

Noyes was not alone in advocating particular sexual practices on the basis of supposedly scientific findings. A surprising form of libertarian eugenic thought runs through much "free love" theory. In fact, Harman's "Lucifer" eventually became the "American Journal of Eugenics." While this strain of eugenics was not that which led to forced sterilization for the poor and otherwise marginalized—and ultimately to other horrors—there is plenty in it to give the modern reader pause. The almost Lamarckian notion that unhappy mothers give birth to diseased or handicapped children seems to have been fairly common. Anarchist-without-adjectives William van Ornum made a fascinating plea for the abolition of marriage on the grounds that it would lead to healthier children.

"Free love" encompassed all of these concerns, and others. It could be at once scientific and romantic—free inquiry might still lead to "true love." Certain sexual practices, masturbation and homosexuality among them, were condemned on fairly conventional grounds by many free lovers. But science, social norms and political exigencies always change. Present day concerns may also become quaint. What remains vital in the "free love" tradition is seriousness, and boldness, with which they struggled for social freedom.

- Shawn Wilbur

in our friendships and monogamous relationships, so why wouldn't we carry that over to an open relationship? Unfortunately, experience also tells us that there are a lot of relationships (both intimate and casual) out there built on what we could call less-than-honest communication. This isn't to say that all monogamous relationships are built on unhealthy communication.

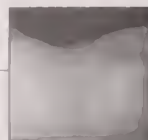
We suggest that both monogamous and non-monogamous relationships could use a healthy re-evaluation of how we talk and listen to each other. The way we communicate is influenced heavily by growing up in a culture that doesn't necessarily encourage positive communication between people. Think of your own basic relationships with friends, co-workers, colleagues or families. How often do your conversations transcend basic small talk or superficial discussions of consumer culture (or the weather) that ultimately seem irrelevant to our own happiness? How often do you have discussions with people who never seem to listen to you? By listening, we mean more than simply hearing what a person has to say. We are talking about actively and empathetically listening to them—being willing to drop your own guard and step over to their side and try to understand exactly how they feel.

These things take a lot of work, and perhaps it is unrealistic to expect that all of our relationships with people would be intense interactions that leave us at once fulfilled and drained. However, honest communication is increasingly important when a relationship is faced with emotional issues of jealousy, possession, happiness and satisfaction—all of which can strain both monogamous and non-monogamous relationships.

Trust is another cornerstone that, just as in traditional relationships, is absolutely essential to maintaining fulfilling open relationships with others. Obviously when we are talking about being intimate (kissing, having sex, etc...) with someone other than your main squeeze depends on an unprecedented amount of trust between everyone involved. Trust is, in itself, a sneaky idea. We often only think about how much we trust someone when they breach the level of trust we have held for them. Sure, we talk abstractly about trust in the context of our relationships all the time. But when two lovers decide to open their relationship, trust becomes even more crucial. On the "life and death" practical side of things, you have to trust that your partners are all engaging in safe sex and not putting any of you in danger. Any breach of this trust can instantly disintegrate the foundation of a relationship and should not be taken lightly. Sophomoric decisions to abandon safe sex tactics "just this one time" instantly place all those involved in the immediate relationships in danger, so a trusting knowledge that you and those involved will place everyone's lives ahead of the immediate heat of the moment is extremely important.

On an equally important interpersonal level, trust is the foundation that keeps an open relationship from being a loose-knit network of people having casual sex. Trusting that someone is able to be intimate with someone else and still maintain their love for you is not something that necessarily comes very easily. It requires a kind of reassurance and validation not practiced in most monogamous relationships. In a monogamous relationship, you trust that your partner is not sleeping around because you have made it one of the basic rules of your relationship. If your partner didn't want to be with you and wanted to sleep with someone else, they would break up with you. In a committed open relationship, when your partner sleeps with others it is important that your partner reassure you that this is not because of your inadequacies. This can be done easily in the way that you interact physically as well as verbally.

In this sense, trust is intimately connected to accountability in a relationship. We trust that our lovers will not simply sleep around looking for something better to come along. We hold them accountable and conversely we are equally responsible to our relationships. And we trust, above all else, our partners' honesty. If their feelings change, we expect to know about it. We've mentioned how crucial open communication is in any relationship—and even more so in open relationships. This means a constant level of open communication needs to be maintained so that problems or issues as well as the great things concerning your relationship are readily shared and discussed.





## What about commitment and security?

The promiscuous bachelor who sleeps with many but is close to none is a common character in our films and TV shows. As a man who is involved in more than one intimate relationship, Jason is also subject to the ridiculous "Go get 'em Tiger!" comments that stereotype him and his relationships as being shallow and self-indulgent, despite his commitment to his partners. And while we have established the fact that non-monogamy is not a chance to sample several partners to decide which one is "best", there are certainly elements at work that keep him from taking any of his relationships for granted. If we are attentive to our partners' needs and we are also free to pursue our own desires, there is a constant energy that circumvents the boredom many couples feel after a long time together while also reassuring the stability of our relationship.

Issues of commitment and security are also complicated when we consider how a woman in open relationships is compared with a man in similar relationships. Although Jason might be treated like a virile stud if someone finds out he is sleeping with more than one person (who is, not coincidentally, always assumed to be a member of the opposite sex), a woman doing the same is considered promiscuous. All of these issues strike at the heart of the paradox of living in a patriarchal society where male actions and attributes are looked upon favorably while the same actions performed by a woman are scorned.

Given these stereotypes, it is no wonder that commitment and security are considered nonexistent in open relationships. It needs to be understood that commitment happens between two people, regardless of any other relationships they are in. Non-monogamy forces us to consider exactly what commitment means in any relationship. In our relationships, commitment means that we will always be there for the other person, regardless of how busy we are, what the living situations are, and what the level of intimacy is.

## Conclusion

There are many more issues to be discussed than can be handled in an essay of this length. Having an open relationship isn't easy. It's not the answer for a declining relationship from which you can't let go. It's not an excuse to be promiscuous, and even though our love is boundless, there are a finite number of hours in each day, so there are some limitations. Like we said at the beginning, we don't believe that open relationships are for everyone. We do believe that we, as individuals, need to keep an open mind and pay more attention to our needs and desires. As progressives, we need to reinvent relationships according to our own needs and according to our changing society, instead of falling back on what our families and societies have always done. Are we continuing tradition because it's the best thing for us or because we haven't put in enough time or effort to think about alternatives?

If you are interested in non-monogamy, the most important thing you can do is to start talking about it. There are many couples out there experimenting with open relationships, but unfortunately, we all seem to be reinventing the wheel each time instead of talking and sharing from our experiences. Such discussion can only help clarify a subject that has been so misrepresented in public discussion that people who do feel like they should be able to express themselves intimately with multiple partners are afraid to even articulate such anomalous thoughts in public. Instead, we are offered endless examples of open relationships that have blown up in peoples' faces or, even worse, individuals whose lives were "ruined" by their "deviant sexual practices". We need to help influence each other by providing positive examples of alternatives, and by fostering discussion wherever possible. ¶

There is a dialogue beginning – slowly. A simple internet search on "non-monogamy" will bring up a number of sites, frequently with individuals' testimonies and descriptions of their experiences. We also looked through a number of books, which you may or may not find helpful. The ones we used included:

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# Oh Baby!

## the third trimester

By: Jessica Mills ☆ Illustrated by: Caroline Kern

By the time you read this, I will have given birth. In the last issue of *clamor*, I wrote an account of the first and second trimester. Here you've got the last trimester, months seven, eight and my current ninth month.

My entire pregnancy has thus far been an unexpectedly positive and empowering experience. I guess I had

no pre-conceived expectations of what it would be like, so it's been one big pleasant surprise. I've learned a lot so far about myself, about my partner, Ernesto, and about how to trust my body.

The first two months, Ernesto and I were out traveling together on freight trains, hitchhiking and aim-

lessly wandering. The third month, we returned home where I reorganized myself and our current pregnant situation.

The fourth month, I was out on tour with Citizen Fish playing saxophone. Months five until now have been spent back at home, nesting comfortably, for what has been the longest stretch of time I've spent at home in years.

I'm 29 years old and still have to learn how to fold a cloth diaper, but feel

confident that I'm ready to be re-named "mommy." Ernesto has more experience with babies than I do, so he's going to be reassuring me along the way when I might feel as helpless as the baby. Together, we hope and dream that we will help teach and nurture a person who will know love, justice and freedom.

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## month seven : my life

It's December and I don't think I've been more calm and relaxed in my life. I notice people around me hustling and bustling about with their holiday shopping and explosive Millennial celebration plans, but none of it phases me. The inescapable holiday advertisements might annoy me, but they don't phase me. Rather, they can't phase me.

Even if I wanted to participate in the shop 'til you drop consumption of needless gifts, I've got no money with which to do so. About to have a baby, I'm concerned about the three months I won't work after it's birth. I'm concerned about how we will make ends meet, but still remain calm and relaxed.

My mom made the two and a half hours drive so she accompany me to one of my appointments with the midwife at the Birth Center. I showed her around the large old house, pointing out the two home-like birthing bedrooms. She most liked the upstairs room where the sunlight streamed in brightly through the lightly curtained windows, but I reminded her that more babies are born late at night than in the day time and besides, normal labors are many hours long, so the amount of potential sunlight in the room would probably not be a lasting comfort. I brought her down to my preferred birthing room, where there's a large tub right next to the bed and an adjoining kitchen right outside the door.

My mom popped her camera out and snapped a few pictures of me while the midwife checked my blood pressure and measured my uterus. The part of the exam when the *Doppler* is used to listen to the baby's heartbeat is always my favorite and it was my mom's, too. Hearing that strong little pump beat it's 120-160 average beats per minute is reassuring and dictates uncontrolled smiles.

The rest of the appointment yielded information that my diabetes screening test results came back normal, I've gained a total of 23 pounds so far, and the baby could come as soon as 7 weeks or as late as 12 weeks and be considered a safe, normal time for its birth. Also, I should increase my iron intake for the duration of my pregnancy since brain development during this last trimester is rapid.

Disgusted by the free mainstream pregnancy magazines that show up in my mailbox, the ones published by corporations like Nestle that offer little in the way of useful information and instead provide new moms with shopping lists of their superfluous and sometimes unhealthy

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## month seven : the baby

At this point in my pregnancy, the beginning of the third trimester, the baby's growth is slow and steady. The baby's body is fattening up, becoming plumper and rounder with fat deposits now building up under the skin. Her body is growing at a faster pace than her head, which until now has been disproportionately large.

The baby's hands are active now, and her muscular coordination has developed so that she's able to get her thumb into her mouth. Thumb sucking calms the baby and strengthens jaw and cheek muscles.

Although the baby's been able to hiccup for some time, by the beginning of this month, baby's got a new skill: the ability to cry!

She also has REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, which means that the unborn baby may be dreaming now. By the middle of this month, the eyelids begin to part. The baby can open her eyes and blink and look around for the first time. The retina, which is at the back of the eye, is important in the reception of light images. Its normal layers are now developed. These layers are important in receiving light and light information and transmitting it to the brain for interpretation. The baby's world inside the uterus is not



always dark. Bright sunlight and artificial light can filter through the uterine wall. The baby now also has fully developed delicate eyebrows and eyelashes.

Also by the middle of this month, the brain forms characteristic grooves and indentions on the surface called the *gyri* and *sulci*. At this time, the amount of brain tissue also increases.

The baby has put on more than a pound in this seventh month, for a total weight of about two and a half pounds. (*In 11 weeks, the baby has increased its weight 10 times!*) The length has reached fifteen inches.

## 8

### month eight: the baby

The baby can hear even more by this stage in my pregnancy; previously he could mainly hear vibrations, but now the nerve endings in his ears that enable him to hear sounds are connected. The baby can hear my voice now, which researchers claim to know because the baby's heart rate increases when his mother or father speaks.

Also, the baby can hear music now, although it has to be played quite loudly since his ears are plugged by water and *vernix*, a white coating like cream cheese that protects the baby's skin from the increasing concentration of its urine in the amniotic fluid. After he's born when the baby hears music you played before birth, he may show he recognizes it by becoming less active while he listens.

During this time, the air sacs inside the baby's lungs become lined with a layer of cells that produce a liquid called *surfactant*. This material prevents the air sacs from collapsing when the baby first begins to breathe after birth.

Brain growth continues to be great at this time. And as the baby grows plumper, the wrinkles in the skin fill out and he appears smoother. Both the *lanugo*, a fine downy hair that appears all over the baby's face and body and keeps its temperature constant, and *vernix* that cover his skin begin to disappear around this time. Whatever *lanugo* is left when he's born will fall out in the early postpartum days.

By the end of the month, the baby weighs about four pounds and its total length is about 19.5 inches.



products, I decided to invest \$30 for subscriptions to two magazines more my style, *Mothering* and *Hip Mama*. A friend recently also sent me a couple issues of *The Radical Mother's Voice* which is mightily bad-ass!

Another friend of mine, who has recently trained to become a doula, lent me a video called *Gentle Birth Choices*. Ernesto and I watched it together and every time a baby was shown popping into the world, we both couldn't control the tears shooting out of our eyes. I don't know what I was expecting an out-of-hospital, natural birth to look like, but I was left overwhelmed for a week. The images our society shows in TV and movie birth situations are obviously overdramatized. This fact should be obvious, so why was I amazed to see that birth is really an extremely calm and slow, gentle process? I don't know, but the calmness and slowness translated into my head as an extremely intense experience! When it comes down to it, it's the woman and baby birthing together and in control of their experience instead of monitors and drugs and sterile hospital staff personnel dictating it for them.

I'm so convinced and confident in my choice to have an out of hospital birth. I'm a pretty stubborn person, but not so stubborn that if it comes down to taking a risk with the baby's or my well-being, I will not refuse to be transported to the hospital. I know no labor is easy, no matter what environment is chosen, and so I'm going to try my best with what will probably be my only birth experience, in the way I think is the wisest and most right-on.

## 8

### Month eight: my life

I began this month, which just happens to coincide with "the new millennium," sick as shit. I actually thought I'd be the only one up and about on January 1 not feeling hung over, but *noooooo*, I had to join the puking ranks. Now that my stomach is pressed high up into my ribs as a result of my upwardly expanding uterus, the heartburn I felt the first of this month was so painful I thought I was having a heart attack. Luckily, I was only sick for a day, bringing my total sick days of this pregnancy to three.

During my appointment with my midwife at the beginning of the month, I learned that the baby's head is already down, just as it should be. I can feel definite feet and knee shapes when I press around my belly and their kicks and rolls are packing a wallop these days!

Also at the beginning of this month, Ernesto and I started attending birth classes. They were held one evening a week at the birth center and offered us all the best parts of the Lamaze, Bradley, etc. methods. At the start of the six week series, I found myself taking notes without pause as the instructor gave us all sorts of information about the different stages of labor. I had to remind myself that this wasn't a class where I'd be given a written test, and instead, I should just calm down and listen as my evaluation would come in the form of practical knowledge about the birth and caring for my newborn, including how to breastfeed.

It's true that babies don't come with an instruction manual, not that I ever read those things anyway, so I'm hoping for some of those natural instincts I keep hearing about to kick in. I was getting nervous about little things like how to give a baby a bath and put on a cloth diaper. I really needed the classes and looked forward to them every Tuesday night for six weeks. I would have never known seemingly simple things like when bathing the baby, don't submerge its belly in water until the little umbilical cord stump has healed into a belly button.

This month, I also started looking forward to my gentle/prenatal Kundalini yoga class every Thursday night. When I first started four months ago, I'd get annoyed by the foreign to me chanting and meditation exercises. Although the chanting and meditations are still my least favorite part, I've become a deep breathing and relaxation junky.

By mid month, it was time to take the ring out of my navel. Talk about stretched tight and sensitive! Other discomforts increased a bit, but remained relatively minor as my growth spurt sleeping marathons followed by uterine ligament soreness became not such isolated incidences any more. They definitely became more regular. Nighttime sleep started to become interrupted with mild lower backache, muscles pulling and hip soreness. When I'd wake in the mornings, the joints in my fingers would feel arthritic, too.

Almost as soon as I started telling people I was pregnant, they wanted to know about a baby shower. Truthfully, I thought it was something we wouldn't do. From my point of view, I didn't want to be the center of attention where people just heap gifts upon me, making me feel all awkward thinking my thanks would come off as not genuine. From Ernesto's point of view, he wanted to dissuade the entire notion of "must consume."

But my good friend Samantha pulled it off for us beautifully. She hand made the little invitations, including the fine details that it was a BYOJ (Bring Your Own Juice) affair. I really enjoyed having a small gathering of friends who genuinely wanted to wish us the best and lend a

hand in the way of giving us useful and practical gifts, including baby-sitting and night-out-on-the-town coupons. An added bonus was that Ernesto's sister and her family came to town for it, as did my parents who brought us my old baby furniture, all repainted. It was definitely fun that night after the shower to fill the little dresser drawers with little baby clothes and blankets.

After filling the drawers, we headed down a few blocks to the Fugazi show. Now that I know the baby's ears are formed enough to hear more than just vibrations, it's my motherly duty to make sure baby gets to hear good music. I couldn't tell if she loved it or hated it, but I definitely had a foot kicking up into my ribs! This month, my little one also heard some of her mom's favorites, Hot Water Music and Cavity.

There were other shows I missed because I'm so pregnant. I've got a dilemma here. I want so bad to go see bands play, have had shows written on my calendar for weeks, but when it comes time to go, I just can't. My mind's desire is there, but my body's comfort is propped up reading. So, my dilemma is that I should be taking advantage of still being able to go, because once the baby comes, I won't even have the luxury to choose to go or not. Breastfeeding will really keeps me attached (pun intended) for the baby's first months!

So, how am I doing this far along? Just fine. No complaints, really. I'm up a total of 32 pounds and can be caught framing old photos and hanging them up around the house while wearing hideous pink and white polka dotted pajamas. Sometimes at work, while tutoring a student in Geometry, my brain will just shut off mid problem. And guests who stay longer than three days have gotten me all unraveled. I'm pregnant, I like it and just want to be able to get comfy wherever and whenever without having to divert my attention away from my task at hand, incubating this little one.

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## month nine : my life

At my 36 week appointment this month, the midwife asked me, "Have you considered a Pediatrician?"

"Uh... No," was my honest reply.

It seems my usual "one step at a time" way of dealing with life isn't going to hold up anymore. It's not going to right now anyway; I have to actually plan ahead for once. I've been so focused on nothing but pregnancy that I've forgotten to consider some pretty important things like what tests I will consent to be performed on my newborn and what doctor to take the baby to for its 24-72 hour check-up.

It's also been suggested to me that I take a tour of the hospital "just in case," write up a birth plan, have the car seat already strapped in the car from here on out, clean the house, launder the clothes, blankets and diapers we've gathered, and on and on and on and on. There's so much to think about now, it seems like the only thing we've decided on is that if we have a boy, we definitely will not circumcise him.

Another thing we're committed to is the idea of the family bed. It doesn't make a whole lot of sense to either Ernesto or I that we would put the baby down to sleep in a separate "nest." Ernesto is calling it his natural primate instinct to keep our little one close. To me, it's just a weird idea to carry this little baby inside me for nine months and then all of a sudden, have it sleep away from me.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that we dialed up "Call-A-Mattress" out of the Yellow Pages and got ourselves a king sized bed. Our little bedroom is practically wall-to-wall bed now. The day we got it in the room and I made it up with a new sheet, I stood back and smiled the



→Baby Shower - Jan. 15, 2000←  
♥ Eight Months Into It!! ♥

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## month nine : the baby

My baby's lungs are almost fully developed now, although their development won't be complete until just before birth. She's probably trying to practice breathing using her lungs, but since no air is available, she instead swallows amniotic fluid into her windpipe, which can give her frequent hiccups.

The baby is still on the thin side at the beginning of the month, but from now until she is born, she will continuously accumulate fat deposits beneath her skin. She needs to get more plump to prepare herself for life on the outside. Fat cells are important for her to be able to regulate a warm enough body temperature after birth.

My uterus has filled up my pelvis and most of my abdomen, all the way up to the lower tip of my sternum. The baby's running out of room to move around in there and sometimes, her feet get caught under my ribs. Her toenails and fingernails have grown to the tips of her toes and fingers.

In this last trimester of pregnancy, the baby has



received antibodies from me and has gotten protection from whatever illnesses I've had, from measles to the common cold, or any diseases I've been immunized against, like polio or smallpox.

She may weigh anywhere from six to 11 pounds.

The baby is ready to be born.

biggest and most satisfied smile. I'm so in love with how our new nest perfectly fits three pillows across.

At my 37 week appointment, my midwife informed me that I had tested positive for Group B Strep (GBS). An exclamatory "SHIT!" was my response. It seems positive GBS screenings are the latest buzz about the medical legal community. Everyone wants to cover their asses, but its trying to do so at the expense of the mothers and newborns. Many pediatricians these days, if the mother has tested positive, call for the newborn to be hospitalized for observation for 48 hours following birth.

Here's the deal: GBS is a bacteria commonly found in the intestinal tract. Ten to 40 percent of pregnant women are colonized with it. Colonization is usually asymptomatic, but can result in severe infection in newborns. Newborn infection, however, is a relatively low risk. Approximately 8,000 babies in the United States get GBS disease each year; 5 -15 percent of these babies die. The current public health prophylactic is for women who test positive to be given intravenous antibiotics during their labors. Without the antibiotic, current statistics reflect a 1 in 200 chance of delivering a baby with GBS disease.

I have no conditions as a result of being colonized with GBS and am considered at low risk for having a baby with GBS disease. However, I have been encouraged by my midwife to receive the antibiotics during labor. I've decided that I will get them, but am still concerned that the pediatrician will want to have the baby hospitalized for 48 hour observation. It's just the way he can legally cover his ass, but it's something I won't be agreeing to. My baby will be in better care with me attending to it than an anonymous nurse assigned a row of infants in the hospital nursery. While the doctor's reasoning is purely his own legal concern, mine is personal, emotional and biological. Ten years ago, women weren't even tested for GBS and I'd be willing to bet that ten years from now, the medical community will not be responding to positive test results with prophylactic antibiotics for the mothers and hospital observation for the newborns.

Two uptight and nervous days followed the news of my positive test result, but I dealt with it the most rational and intellectual way possible. After doing a little research and discussing it again with my midwife, I'm feeling that everything is going to be just fine.

Everything IS fine. People who look at my belly let me know they don't see a single stretch mark. To be honest, I wouldn't care if I did get some. I'd carry them as if they were inkless tattoos I earned. I'm more short of breath these days due to my lungs being moved back out of the way of my upwardly expanding uterus, but that's OK, too. I'm reminded to just breath deep and relax, which is what I'm going to need to be good at during labor. I feel comfortable and satisfied, already looking back a few months at what a great feeling it's been to be two months, then three, four, five, six, seven and eight months pregnant. I'm addicted. I've never felt better.

My due date is two weeks from now. What does that mean? It means that the baby could come as soon as now up to four weeks from now and that's when my life and lifestyle as I know it is going to change forever. This close to my due date, Ernesto and I accept that the baby is already here. The little baby's head is now nestled lower into my pelvis and the only way out of the situation is birthing it through there.

For now, I still ride a bike, go to work teaching kids, write for my zine and others, play music, volunteer at the non-profit-volunteer-run punk record store, take naps and eat voraciously. Yes, having sex is still in there, too. I know you didn't ask, but my friend Sam did. Do you think any women would be into being pregnant for 9 months if sex was out of the question? Well, maybe a few would be, but how do you think I got this way?

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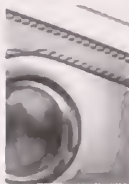
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#### Recommended magazines and zines:

- hip mama. P.O. Box 9097 / Oakland, CA 94613 / [www.hipmama.com](http://www.hipmama.com) / [ariel@hipmama.com](mailto:ariel@hipmama.com)
- Mothering. P.O. Box 1690 / Santa Fe, NM 87505 / [www.mothering.com](http://www.mothering.com) / [mother@pcspublink.com](mailto:mother@pcspublink.com)
- The Radical Mother's Voice. c/o Sherry Milam @ Cricket Farm / Route 1, Box 750J / Elgin, TX 78621 / [osherry@rocketmail.com](mailto:osherry@rocketmail.com)

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## In Search of Love.

a man, a motorcycle and the infinite kindness of strangers

by Ben Fogelson

*This is god*, said the glorious Mexican, holding his hands to the sky, *this is God*.

I was a short, nervous, unattractive young man. My hair sat flatly on my head, so flatly upon my skull in fact, that you might say it was sketched there. You might also say that the limp façade of my locks and my droopy shoulders paralleled my life's codes in general. Don't push the limits. Put up with what is set before you. Go along and don't question. Up until last summer, I did just that, following those horrible codes, and I'd complacently lived a self-sheltered life, trudging through colorless mud, dragging myself through the paces, until one day, a year back, I found myself packing green-slime in Seattle, and came to my senses.

"Now that's enough of that." I thought, lifting my right leg over the seat of the unfamiliar and massive Kawasaki, starting the engine, and making the second-best decision of my life.

Riding across the country on a motorcycle heavy enough to squash you if it tips over, was a huge reach for me, from my point of view. But sometimes a good reach is all you need. Then the rest is just flow.

So I flowed.

I left it all behind: the slime, the paycheck, and the all too frequent calls to mom. I left security and a flannel bed behind. I left Rick and

Murphy and Cory and Kev and Rachael. I left the view of the Space Needle. I left my books, and I left the curled-up wooden Balinese figurine that squatted on my shelf. I left behind company. I left behind bank accounts. And I left behind dad, and sis, and bro. I flowed, and I left it all behind to find Buddha on the highways of America.

Why Buddha? Why not? I could've said God, I suppose, or something maybe a little more tangible, like reason, or meaning, 'cause for me those terms were all interchangeable. They were something or someone I lacked, wanted, or needed. I grew up oblivious of these things, satisfied at least for a while, playing with walnut-shells in creeks with my friends, or a variety of other endless diversions, and we kept the world nicely at bay. But all that changed before we could even complete our baseball card collections. In middle school there was divorce; in our minds the worst thing on the planet. Gossip spread like wildfire with the first victims. Then, by high school, it was hard to *find* a whole family, and at that point nobody cared anyway. It happened in my home too. And for a while people talked about nuclear war, everyone killing each other, and apartheid, legal slavery, in a land heavily invested in by our multi-billion dollar companies. Quite disillusioning, when your illusion is a warm womb, a nice childhood, or at the very least, a pleasant world.



"Where is love?" I sometimes thought, as it seemed there was such little love. It was all about money, and that started to hit closer to home when I took on expenses in college. I was forced to work, and I experienced monotony, boredom. I was listless. My younger brother would be a doctor, and I never had such soul-tugging aspirations. I had no ambition, and the action I finally took was to a great part grace of sheer frustration. Besides, if I'm forced to consider it, Buddha's got a big round belly, which is cool, and so I thought he'd do.

Instead of Buddha I met Big John. I found corn-fed beef, and men in blue. I found third-rate hotels, hints of ferocious canines, and a Mexican holy man who pumped dirty unleaded.

Why the highways? What else to do, start going to church? Right. What to do in such a huge, tiny, crazy, unhappy, wonderful world, other than go out and risk being wonderful myself? Maybe it was Kerouac who finally inspired me.

In my dwarfish attic room with the miniature square window, I flew through *On the Road* and *The Dharma Bums*, too. I broke out in a cold, discomforting sweat. In those pages I saw something that got my blood cells doing sit-ups. After a little fantasizing, I too wanted to be a famous writer in a smoky room. I too wanted to be incredibly quick of wit, with a love of life so great as to demand description, and I wanted to have adventures. I wanted to avert a mugging, stage an orgy, and write a novel, all at once, with a jug of wine cooling my armpit. I wanted to be wanted, and lonely, and unreachable, and hip. I wanted to see a river of yellow cars, belching and farting. (The cars, not me.) I guess that means I wanted New York, but first, I wanted Kerouac's road.

So it was decided I was going to go. Yellow lines would guide.

I bought a motorcycle from the cops. I tried the red lights and the siren, but all I got was a spark and a whine. I packed the compartments with a torn map, clothes, a tarp, tools, a camera, and a small plastic Yoda. I looked through the windshield, and though it was entirely scratched I saw through it like it was air. It could've been completely black the day I left, and I would've seen through it. I was downtown, loaded up. My hair flew fantastically in the wind, and the air was still. My goggle lenses were blue. I'd hid whiskey presents in the bottom drawers of my co-worker's Formica desks, never to know if they were found. I put my goggles over my eyes. It was 5:30. The city was fast and angry. What was I doing? "*What am I doing?*" I thought, banking south onto the interstate at rush hour, on a bike that weighed close to a thousand pounds.

Did I mention I'd never ridden anything larger than a ten-speed a week before that? It just goes to show how trapped this rat felt, how bad I needed something between my teeth other than yellow mold, to go ahead and risk the gleaming grills and dented sidewalls of America. What "food" would I find to slake my withering soul on this journey? I feared there was none, nothing I could swallow, digest, reconstruct, believe in, and I feared the ride would be in vain. It was not.

Eugene was on the way and I had to zip through and see Emm. She and I had spent a lively week a month ago, when I made a wedding visit. We went to the coast and lost the car keys doing handstands in the zillions of pieces of soft glass circling the ocean. She fired my blood like a kiln

of plasmatic magma. We made love floating. There was so much water we were inside it, and a tattooed man saved us from the night and his pet boxer. He woke up and appeared in the doorway of his Streamline trailer, in the light cast by far off night buggies. He stood there dressed in the skimpiness of nothing but tightly-whites, with his hair askew, and then drove us to a motel. Emm and I looked back and forth at each other in the darkness of his cab. At the hotel the bed was wiry but warm, not like the A.M. air. The television had cable and movies, but we didn't watch it.

Emm was a real find, but I couldn't hold onto her. We lived apart, and then I had to take my leave, unable to stop. If she and I had lived in the same town, it would have been on. We would have been together. I sensed. But for now, memories of sand sustained me.

*This is god*, said the old Mexican, holding his hands to the sky, *this is God*.

A couple thousand miles down the road, and I'd already ridden through one snow-flurry, picked cotton off a farm truck at 70 miles and hour, and been attacked by a farmer's daughter. I mean a farmer's daughter's father. I call it attacked. It was in Utah one sub-zero night that this waitress had winks with me, while her father surveyed through the rectangular kitchen window. He promptly insisted I stay in his field. Later that night, in a horrible drizzling coldness, I was scared by a cougar, kids doing doughnuts in the lot next door, way too many rain clouds, and industrial sprinklers which popped up suspiciously at four in the morning. If that's not an attack, I don't know what is. I retreated to my bike, soaked, and then to a motel, screaming out of town in the morning.

At this point, instead of Buddha, I met Big John.

The chain from the K1000 loosened near Abilene. By then I was already riding lightly, guru-like, almost cross-legged, having met that old Mexican back in Colorado. He'd done something to me, and now I was riding without the gritty edge of not knowing the end of the story. Regardless, the trip had to go on, and there were present concerns. I had to fix the chain, get it tightened, or it might've spun loose, locked around my throat, and taken my head off or something.

I'm not handy and never have been. I'm lazy, and good at that. I had little idea of loose chains. People told me how, before I left, to tighten a chain, so I got the tools out of my side bag, and pushed back my greasy sleeves. I started loosening nuts under the bike, but with each turn of the wrench, I saw my trip being undone. All I could think about was that I was going to screw up my bike, and so as the vision got clearer, progressing towards a walk to the nearest bus station, I quickly screwed back every bolt in the opposite direction, and gave them each an extra quarter-turn just to be sure. I wiped my hands on the leather of my pants. Another day being talented and useful. Ha. Ha. I've ended up being a person who can't do what needs doing. I wasn't running from nothing, I suppose.

I trotted in a circle and then jogged to a phone book. Imagine a man blowing a pound of dust off an old church tome. That was the Abilene



phone directory and I, without the religion. Kawas...ah...here it is. Exit to dealership.

Only half an hour after waking up, and I already had a new problem and a new solution. "Come on in," Big John said, "I'll check it out." That's service, you know. We don't get that kind of thing where I lived. You don't stop what you're doing just to help someone. God forbid. But there he was, right when I arrived, pulling at the lever that lowered the mechanic's lift. He and another man, younger, sounded like leaking tires when they pushed my ride up the ramp onto the lift, displacing another bike, and I was delighted and amazed they would change their schedules for a stranger.

John was enormous. John was friendliness. John was like an escaped gorilla. His dupe, a tractor-hat wearing wrench-turner, lifted a screwdriver and said to me, "Gosh, how can you up and travel like that?"



I wish I could. You've got balls as big as a bull, man."

"As big as a bull, or as big as a bull's balls?" I asked him off-handedly. He sort of just stood there a second, fizzing like something had malfunctioned. I heard a noise over by Big John's belt. In low notes, over the hums of the meandering radio, his stomach gurgled like an annoyed hippo. He

didn't react, instead he went to work.

I was really feeling free. Here were two men circling my motorcycle, turning a bolt here and cleaning something there. I was putting my life in their hands. They were doing what I figured I couldn't do in a million years, tinker with mechanics, and they were doing it with blatant kindness, and I admired them for it, and they were commenting on *my* freedom.

"You could take off," I said, implying a road trip.

"I've got the wife and kids," Tractor Joe said. That was his choice. He wanted them more than the road, and you've got to respect that. Then, while still repairing, Big John, over the rumble of his great stomach, got to telling me that the topless bar down the road was in danger of being closed by the sheriff.

"There's some real tight-asses around here, but basically I've always considered myself a liberal," Big John said, all half ton of him. It isn't the weight that makes the conservative, I suppose.

Big John was a truck. It didn't matter that he considered himself a liberal, titty-bar or no titty-bar. What mattered was that he was going way out of his way to aid an unknown process. He had other things to do, I'm sure, but he continued to work on my bike, showing me how to check the chain, look out for cops, and ride into Austin. After forty-five minutes, - past he brought the bike down with a clean bill of health.

"Take this yellow copy," he said, "over to the retail side, and they'll ring you up." My stomach lurched a little at the reality of payment. I had almost forgotten that I was buying a service, and that my bank account was meager at best. He had written a carbonized code upon the sunny sheet. I turned my back to his ursine smile, while he and Joe pushed the bike out front, and then returned to work. The last I got from Big John was a "Good luck", a Texas wave, and the phenomenal sounds from his hungry belly. I retailed.

Oblivious retail clerk: That'll be three dollars.

Me: Excuse me?

O.R.C.: Three dollars, please.

I was blown away. My mouth dropped.

I went back over to the shop, and there was Big John behind the glass, toiling over the hog he'd displaced at my arrival. In our conversation he'd told me about a breakfast place to go to if I was in an adventuresome spirit.

"Of *course* he's adventuresome," said Tractor Joe, longing for the open road himself. "Look at this fucking guy." He was right. I'd been up for anything since I got the idea to leave the West Coast, and there I was, road-dusty and ignorant, not able to tighten a cham but eager to ride thousands of miles. I was up to it, and it was a short ride.

The joint was a Mexican shack, a tortilla hut, and I sat by the window. One ninety-nine and a few words in Spanish bought tortillas, eggs, coffee, bacon, pancakes, and juice, as well as giggles from the señoritas

under the heat-lamps. Forty-five minutes and I'd gone from near disaster to a scrumptious breakfast. Things work out, and sometimes well. But I could do better.

"Do you know a man who comes in here," I said to a large mama with a pencil behind her ear, starting to lift my hands wide, "who is big, muy *gordo*, named Big John?" She smiled, and smooth, rolling laughter told me she knew him. She said all he ever ordered were two, tiny gorditas, and that made us both laugh, and I got some to go. I raced back to the shop, and then was soon out of town. By the time I was a few miles gone, I imagine John must have sauntered up to his register to be met by

a brown bag filled with steaming Mexican love. What comes around goes around, sometimes quicker than you think.

Riding away from Abilene was shockingly blue, like the sky. I was exhilarated from a successful morning adventure, and feeling the sadness of riding away from love.

The Mexican had told me. I don't remember his name and never will. The memories I have of our meeting are clear, the slides in my mind are focused well, but his name is lost forever.

The ground between the pumps and the two-lane highway was a red pebbly material that made me think of childhood weekends in the Sierras: lava, ponderosa, and dryness. The hills around the station were Martian, however without the redness, but instead browns and grays, from low scrub and rock. The sun was in a non-worrisome time, leaving plenty of minutes to ride, but still providing heat to the fast biker. The Mexican Guru stood with his hands out of his overall pockets, and even before I got off the bike I could see the wrinkles caused by years of work in a desiccated land. He stood by the pumps, having just finished helping someone, or having not helped anyone at all. It's not the progression of separate moments that is clear, but of the moment in total.

Gas poured for a moment or two, but it took me an hour to fill up. The Mexican roamed like an ant around the pumps, but now it seems to me that he danced a complex step, to the caws of vultures and the creaks of a swinging sign. He hypnotized me with stories, the way a band starts slow. He told me of his brother in the military who told him secrets. He talked about the tribulations of men and women, quoting the bible. He loudly whispered at a metered pace. After fifteen minutes he knew my name.

"You know," he said, smiling white teeth a dentist had never seen, and raising his arms to the sky and the hills, "all of it out there is shit. But there's love everywhere, everywhere, if you know where to look for it."

"That's *so* awesome. That's beautiful. Can I take your picture? Would you lift your hands up again like that? Yeahhh...like that. Yes!" I loved the way he looked and talked, and I took pictures of him.

"This is love," he said, gesturing to the world. "This is love."

And then it hit me. Flowers were blooming. The sign was creaking. It was all lovely. It was largely shit, but it was all lovely.

I turned on the ignition and sped eastwards towards my western home, running a time-line that would lead me there. I still wanted the trip, but now I knew where I was headed.

At the station the sound of my engine was still in the valleys, and I thought, with the dying of that particular echo behind me, *Emm is kind of like a god* ♪





# IT WAS A CLOUDY DAY

By Sprout



Travel magazines are full of essays written about exotic travel adventure stories, often filled with great deals, out-of-the-way cafes and bargain shopping among other things. But, unless the reader mimics the writer's journey step-by-step, the essay is simply superlative self-indulgence.

Besides, anyone can leave home and appreciate the quaintness of out-of-town life, but how many people can enjoy the hidden wonders of their own town? Many of us spend so much time trying to leave and imagining the adventures that await, that we forget to have adventures where we are...

It was afternoon when I pulled into Eugene. I had been on vacation for several weeks, driving my newly acquired 1973 Chevy pick-up across the Midwest and visiting old friends. Vacations are intended to relax a person, but after driving almost straight through from Denver, on this particular afternoon, I found myself to be dead tired.

I smiled upon seeing my apartment. I hadn't had time by myself for quite a while, and to some degree, I guess I missed being alone. For the first time in weeks I didn't feel rushed or need to be somewhere at a specific time. I was glad to be back in town.

The first time I woke up in my own bed again, I realized how wonderful it was. I missed getting up while it was still dark, the same time that most of my friends were going to sleep. I put on my jacket and grabbed a clean mason jar to fill with coffee, and I set off to explore. I knew the streets and the alleys inside out, but something about coming back made it all seem new again.

Only a few cars drove past me as I walked back from the store, but I always enjoyed thinking that they were on their way somewhere. To work or school or jail, but in a few minutes, I'd be back in my warm apartment, watching the sun come up through my window, while I drank coffee and failed to solve another crossword puzzle.

I could only relax for so long, however. Pretty soon I would have to seek another job. But for the moment, I was still too exhausted from my trip to put any real effort into it. So I did what every slacker in Eugene does during the Christmas season: I applied for a job at the fruit place that hires literally every applicant who walks through the door.

We piled into my pickup, Biff and Suggs in the back. I had been away for a while, as I said or I wouldn't have been surprised, but I was a little caught off guard when I recognized about half of the people waiting in line for the same job. How very Eugene.

The receptionist had obviously been on auto-pilot for hours, "You will need to attend a 40-hour training period, can you do that? You will need two pieces of government identification. If you don't have two pieces of identification you must leave and may not apply for the position until you return with two pieces of identification. You must be able to type 20 words a minute, accurately. Can you do that?"

I had already been through the typing portion of the application process, and though I've used computers for nearly twenty years, I never learned to properly type. So, I was a bit nervous sitting down for the test. Tests of any kind always remind me of high school. I tried to relax as I listened to the receptionist review the completed test of the woman seated next to me, "Only two errors; all in all, this is a very good score." I rushed through my test, assuming that it would be flawless, so I was stunned to learn that I'd made seven mistakes. Looking closely, however, they were all technical in nature. Punctuation and such. I stuck in periods after street abbreviations such as "Ave." or "Blvd." And, I wrongly assumed that the type of errors I made would be reflected on my application. I brought this to the attention of the receptionist, who responded, "There will be many things that you will have to unlearn.

Our staff is trained to read and understand the ordering information in a specific way. So, it's very important that you relay that information to them accurately." Your staff can't read or understand the difference between "Blvd" and "Blvd." on a line labeled "street address?" Maybe you need to hire a new staff. It suddenly occurred to me that this entire test was automated, and there wasn't a single employee who knew how to think beyond their training. My seven errors were going to be recorded as seven errors with no consideration as to what kind of errors they were. Was seven too many? Was I still eligible? But, the absurdity of it all hit home when the receptionist finally said, "Only seven errors; all in all, this is a very good score."

Lorna had moved to New York a while back, so I was slightly surprised to see her walk in. We didn't bother to say hello to each other though, instead just falling back into comfortable conversation as if she'd never moved away to begin with. She wandered over and was listening to the receptionist tell the applicant in front of her that they would need to type twenty words a minute, when her face went white. Eyes wide, as if in disbelief, she leaned over and asked me, "You can type 20 words a minute?" Uh-huh. "Can I type twenty words a minute?" Uh-huh. Don't worry Lorna, I think a monkey can type 20 words a minute. Just then, Holly returned from the typing room to announce, "I didn't pass," everyone else laughed, but Lorna just glared at me.

She grabbed the application and sat on the floor, next to us. Turning to the second page, she proclaimed, "They want me to list all my experience, but I can't do anything!" You mean because you've been in school for ten years? "Yeah." Don't worry about it Lorna, they hire everybody.

So, perhaps it was a little ironic that Lorna should return to announce that she got 100 percent on the test, while the rest of us with actual skills ended up with seven errors. Or, perhaps it was just annoying.

I was the first person finished with the four or five step interview process, but I had to wait for the others, so I lounged about in the hallway listening to Chris embarrass old ladies with his boisterous conversation about drugs and sex. And finally, three hours later, we all piled back into my truck and after dropping everyone off, I headed straight for the bar. I would need a few beers before waking up to the idea of waking up for someone else again.

And a few beers is exactly what I wished I had those first few mornings of stumbling to work. There was a coffee machine in the break room, but a little scotch probably would have made it easier to sit through 40 hours of training designed to teach the slowest monkeys in the room.

I quickly fell into numbness, as I marched to and from work every day, trying to forget that just a week or two earlier I was arrogant enough to taunt the passing cars on their way to work, as I wandered the empty, morning streets alone. The numbness grew and continued to consume every minute of my free time, until one morning when I received an unexpected reminder of what my days without work used to be like.

I made that morning walk to work, in the dew and through the sad and dank streets. I carefully climbed the four flights of stairs, even though there wasn't a line for the elevator. And after standing in line for several minutes, I found my name absent from the daily roster of workers. With a sigh, I walked down the hall until I reached the alphabetized list of employee schedules, which was posted next to the door of the quiet room. I found my name near the bottom of the list, and it seemed that I had unexpectedly been given the day off. They had changed my schedule, along with hundreds of others without telling anyone. The secretary urged me to stay, but I decided that coffee and a donut sounded better. I made my way back home at a leisurely pace and picked up the

*I quickly fell into numbness, as I marched to and from work every day, trying to forget that just a week or two earlier I was arrogant enough to taunt the passing cars on their way to work, as I wandered the empty, morning streets alone.*

day's paper, after noticing an article about the WTO on the front page. All of my friends were in Seattle, and I was stuck in town, under the assumption that I would be working. At least I could have a quiet day alone for a change. I continued my walk home, pausing in the street for a moment. In just an hour or less, the road would be flooded with cars on their way to work, but for the moment, everything seemed as quiet as a Sunday. And for just a moment, things felt as they should: I was the one who could take my time, while everyone else was getting ready for work. But, I knew that I had better enjoy it while it lasted.

The following day it was back to the grindstone. Head on the guillotine.

After work, I headed straight to the bar to take the edge off of my numbness. If I'm going to keep from feeling anything, I want it to be on my terms. And, I was on my way out the door, after a couple of quick pints, when I ran into Holly. She had returned from Seattle covered in bruises from what I thought were rubber bullets, but she broke my heart by telling me that it was only from falling off a lamppost. Oh well, at least she almost died from being trapped by the police in a cloud of tear gas. I needed to hear revolutionary romance of some kind to brighten my fading afternoon. We walked to my apartment.

And we were in the middle of passionate sex when the phone rang a couple of times. I ignored the interruption and continued to undress her, as my bites covered her belly with more bruises. But after a wonderful orgasm, I checked the Caller ID to see who had phoned. The number was from out of state, and I didn't recognize it. Imagine my surprise to find a message from my old friend Nic! The media had been telling him that Anarchists from Eugene were solely responsible for the violence at the WTO. He was calling to make sure that I wasn't in jail, but as he pointed out at the end of his phone message, if I had been, I wouldn't be there to let him know. And with an awkward "goodbye" the message ended. But something told me that his reason for calling wasn't so simple.

I had looked up Nic while passing through Lawrence a few weeks earlier, on my recent vacation. Prior to that, we hadn't spoken to each other for about four years. I had been traveling around a bit, after moving back to Kansas City from Boulder, and Nic was kind enough to let me sleep on his floor for a few days. Nic was a heavy drinker at the time, and on what would be my last night at his apartment, I was asleep on the floor when Nic came in drunk around 2am. He was screaming and throwing things, so I got up to see what was wrong. I knocked on his door only to hear something smash against the wall. I tried talking to him through his locked door, but he started screaming at me and seemed to be getting continually more violent. And with that I made a mistake I regretted for years to come. I made a mistake that kept me awake at night and which haunted both my dreams and my waking world. That mistake was packing my things and fleeing under the cover of darkness without so much as a note.

Sometime later I met this girl, on a basketball court I think. I'm not sure what was going through my head, but within 24 hours I found myself in a car with this crazy woman and a pound of pot, on our way to the East Coast. In retrospect, I'm not sure why she wanted me along, but prior to leaving, we romanticized the prospect of sleeping on a secluded Rhode Island beach together. We hadn't even got ten miles out of town before we started arguing, but I was dead set on romance if it killed me. Hours later in Pennsylvania, we were stranded on Interstate 80 at 3am, in a freak traffic jam that backed things up for endless miles and which kept us sitting in traffic for hours.

What do you mean you don't want to make out? What else are we going to do for the next two hours while they clear those overturned semis? Well, in that case, I'm going for a walk. She screamed in protest about being left alone. Left alone? You idiot, we're in a fucking traffic jam! There are people everywhere! I walked down the middle of the highway between endless rows of towering semis, which sat barely a shoulder's width from each other. I wondered how these guys kept from colliding as they sped along at 70 miles an hour, but I quickly remem-



bered that it was several crashed semis that had us all stranded here at this strange hour. It was a moonless night, and the only light was the glow and hum from this sea of taillights. I picked up the pace, running as my mind raced beside me. I darted through this towering maze of steel, realizing that I was like a rat in a cage. This girl was my cage, and all I could do was sit and wait until we could get off of the interstate. I felt helpless and trapped, just as I would feel four years later, sitting in that office building answering telephones amidst a maze of computers and desks and that familiar glow and hum of artificial lights. At the time, however, all I knew was that everything seemed surreal. Enough so that I was convinced I would wake up any minute.

Eventually I got dumped out in Albany, New York, where a proselytizing Christian kept me distracted long enough for some crack head to steal my address book. Somehow I made it back to Kansas City, but I was without the phone numbers or addresses of my friends. I probably should have tried to track down Nic, but I let it slide, instead becoming involved in a comfortable sexual relationship with my old friend, Carol.

I lost myself in bliss, spending my days working on one of my books, which still sits unfinished in my filing cabinet. Time passed slowly until the day I was abruptly kicked out of her apartment in exchange for the company of a strapping, 18-year-old hunk who had knocked her up. I worked for about a month saving money before moving to Eugene. And even then, it wasn't for several months before I got around to calling Nic one night. About nine months had passed by then, and he hung up at the recognition of my voice. That was that. I never tried to get in touch again, though I thought about it often. More than once I found his number on the Internet and sat down next to the telephone with the intention of calling. But, I never worked up enough courage.

*Reuniting was awkward for both of us, but I'm pretty sure that I was the only one on the verge of crying. And I did just that as I approached his house.*

Imagine my surprise at how happy Nic was to hear from me when I called him from the Bottleneck, in late October. It's only unfortunate that I had to spend all afternoon drinking to bring myself to do it. By the time I made it over to his house, I had put away six or seven pints during the preceding hours. I almost didn't make it to his house, for that matter. I stopped several times on my bicycle ride over there and considered turning back. Luckily, for once in my life, I didn't give up.

Reuniting was awkward for both of us, but I'm pretty sure that I was the only one on the verge of crying. And I did just that as I approached his house. It was all too much to process. I was suddenly greeted with the last four years of my life as my memories were regurgitated, and I was unexpectedly buried in an avalanche of guilt and shame. But, in spite of this, our meeting went well, and we parted as friends once again.

So, when Nic called to ask if I was in Seattle, something told me that he was just being polite and acting like an adult. I'd like to think that the reason he really called was just to say that he's glad we're friends again. Well, I'm glad too, Nic.

Exhaustion from work combined with a couple of beers at the end of my shift every day was starting to result in passing out earlier and earlier each night. Suddenly, 8 p.m. wasn't an unusual bedtime for me anymore. And, along with going to bed early, comes getting up early. I always knew that working turned my world upside down, but now my sleeping schedule had fallen victim to the machine, as well. This wasn't so bad when I had to be at work anyway, but on my days off, it was just plain annoying.

On this particular morning, I woke up at 4 a.m. wishing that the corner store was open or at least that I had some fresh coffee in the house. Three hours later the sun still hadn't risen, but I walked down the alley wondering if the yuppie who owned the market would be on time for a change. The streets were filled with headlights, which hurriedly sped past me on their way to offices somewhere, I assumed. Because I

now knew that's what everyone did with their day. I could tell from a block away that the market was still closed, but as I approached, I harbored a false sense of hope that the "open" sign would suddenly turn on.

It wasn't quite raining, but it wasn't quite dry, either, and I stood under the awning of the shop and peered into the window for signs of movement. Things looked promising, so I decided to buy a paper to read while I waited for the store to open. With my fingers mentally crossed, I carefully dropped ten nickels into the vending machine for a copy of the daily, because I knew that those machines lashed out against anything that wasn't a quarter. This time I was in luck, and the front opened effortlessly. I fumbled lazily through the local news while out of the corner of my eye, I watched the owner stroll around the store.

Finally the lights went on, and I darted for the door's handle. Inside I was immediately assaulted with the greeting, "We've only got decaf so far." I'll wait, I said and sat down at the small table near the window. He was less than concerned about getting another pot of coffee started though, and something told me that I was going to be there for a while.

The donut guy came in with a new delivery, and the owner promptly took the old donuts and dumped them in the garbage. Any other store in town would have set them outside, knowing that in this town, they'd be gone in a matter of minutes. But the poor and homeless obviously never crossed the mind of this yuppie-fuck. For a moment I wondered why I give my money to this dick at all. Then I remembered that the nearest market is blocks away and the only other good coffee place wasn't open at 7 a.m., which is already three hours later than I originally wanted it!

Finally, 30 minutes later, I started my stroll back home, this time with the sun creeping over the horizon to remind me that I had better hurry up and get something productive done before it disappears again and I'm back at work selling fruit once more. And since I had called in sick, I decided to take the sun's advice. I quickened my pace a bit and started to think about which book I could break into or who I could write a letter to or how nice it would be to sit in my bed while I worked on the crossword, and with that I heard a splash. I glanced back to see my newspaper lying in a puddle of mud. In all of my excitement about having something to do, I forgot the newspaper was cradled under my arm. I rushed for the paper and managed to salvage the crossword puzzle, but I was forced to ditch the rest.

Inside, I picked up my red pen, the only one I could find, and headed for the bedroom. On the floor, at the foot of my bed sat an unfinished puzzle with the clues scribbled in red, and I wondered for a moment if the red pen had anything to do with not being able to finish. I took a drink of my coffee and sat down, only to fill in half-a-dozen answers before giving up and taking my pen out to the dumpster, where it landed on a mud-covered newspaper. Oh well, there's always that book I was going to read.

The following morning came so fast that I questioned whether I had actually had a day off. I struggled to remember what book it was I had read or what I had done all day. But, my memory offered no sign of anything except the job.

It was 5:45 a.m. and I walked in the dark, across the parking lot near the abandoned gym. The blacktop was cracked and potted, and my sight was blurred with the morning fog. I needed something to wake me up, but my supervisor prohibited coffee in the phone rooms, because it might spill. So I slumped into my seat in the corner and cursed my recent vacation for leaving me in this financial mess. But, poor or not, I couldn't take much more of this. This job might have been temporary, but it had already lasted too long for me.

That evening arrived with a surprising bit of energy. I was down at the pool hall when Mike got into town. We hadn't seen each other for a few months, but he was polite enough to sit quietly while I finished up a couple of games. And as quiet and well-behaved as he was, we still looked sideways at each other every few seconds, because the music and all of the people in the bar were a little weird. I finished up, and we ran out screaming and in search of another place to drink.

We made it back to my apartment, and I threw a couple of blankets on my sofa for the guy. Excitedly, I showed him my bed with my newest obsession: a typewriter tucked under the blankets like a teddy bear or a particularly good girlfriend. But, I think he's used to my odd behavior by now, because he just blinked and went back to the sofa where I forced him to sleep through the rat-tat-tat of my ailing typewriter as I would wake up periodically in the middle of the night, crazed with inspiration.

Deciding to use my guest as an excuse to get some sleep, I called in sick to work again. So, instead of setting my alarm clock, I turned it off for a change. And as I reached down to the floor, where it sat, I noticed my empty coffee jar from earlier this morning. It reminded me that the owner of the corner store, although fairly young, went in for open-heart surgery this morning. One of the employees mentioned it to me that morning as I was picking out a muffin. And I must say that I didn't feel any real empathy for the guy. In fact, I almost hate to admit it, but the first thought that came into my head was that it was probably some sort of karma for throwing out those donuts.

I woke Mike up earlier than guests usually appreciate, but I get excited when I have visitors. I cooked us a big breakfast of curry and soothed the spicy beast with the last beer in the refrigerator and a little scotch. Lazily we listened to records, talked about zines and gossiped while our curry-stuffed bellies ached for us to stop eating.

After a couple hours of, though, we left the sanctuary of my apartment so that Mike could track down some other friends and run a few errands.

I didn't feel like standing in line at the Post Office with Mike, so I told him that I'd meet him at the bookstore across the street. As I crossed the rain-smeared pavement, I tried to dodge one of the local spare-changers, who hit me up for some cash. I made it across the street safely, but immediately on the other side of the road sat a diabolical smile crunched up against the wall. I thought it was another local nut at first, but suddenly I realized that it was an out-of-town nut, instead.

"Hi" she said. Uh-oh.

Mike had mentioned that she was in town, but I had hoped that I wouldn't run into her. Next time instead of hoping I should just stay home with the door bolted shut.

Months earlier, before my vacation, I fell into yet another uncomfortable intimacy. The final evening ended in an all too predictable division. But, she was off to Latin America, and I was heading back to Eugene, so in some ways it hardly seemed to matter. She said that she'd be coming back to Eugene before the first of the year, but considering our short-lived and tragic history, I had expected to be free from all uncomfortable future interactions. This obviously wasn't going to be the case, and to top it off, it was Mike who had originally introduced us and been a past lover of hers. So there I was, trapped between the two of them, as she corralled me into joining them for dinner.

She attempted to make small talk, but I was careful to keep the rim of my pint glass close to my lips, garbling any conversation that I might be forced to participate in. Mike finally drove me home, apologizing the whole way. Don't sweat it Mike.

He left town the following day, and I tried to get back into the swing of walking to work at 5:45 every morning for a full day of being locked tightly away under the flicking fluorescents and continual buzz of office computers. I'd enter that building before even the sun woke up and would leave with only an hour or two of those gray, Winter clouds left, before the sky would collapse into darkness. And along with it, I could feel my soul becoming black. With increasing regularity, I found myself calling in sick for work. Eventually though, even calling in sick got to be too much of a hassle, and I quit calling in altogether.

The next morning I woke up to the first blue sky I'd seen in weeks. Maybe it wasn't such a cloudy day. c

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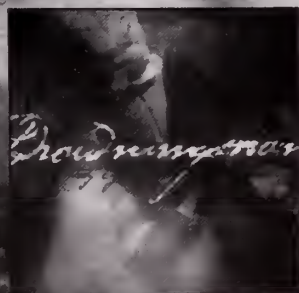
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